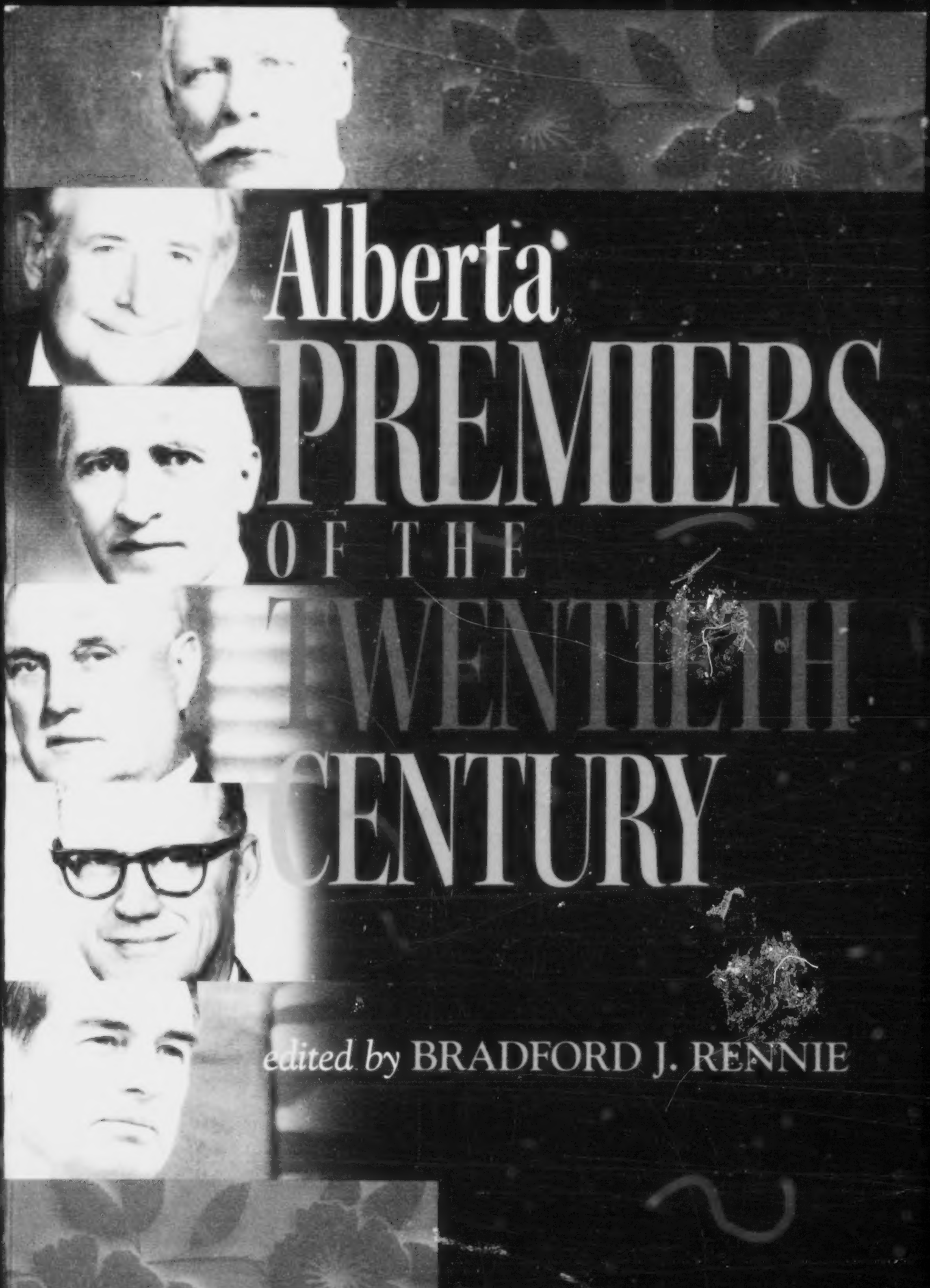

Alberta PREMIERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

edited by BRADFORD J. RENNIE

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Alberta Premiers
# of the Twentieth Century

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2004

UNIVERSITY OF
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Introduction

Alberta Premiers of the Twentieth Century is a collection of mini-biographies, each written by a different author, of all of Alberta's Premiers up to Ralph Klein. The contributors represent a wide range of political viewpoints and a variety of occupational backgrounds: academic and "popular" historians, political scientists, journalists, a sociologist, and a former political "insider." Experts in their fields, their work is scholarly—well researched, accurate, and insightful—but also well written and accessible to a general readership.

Frederick W.G. Haultain: Premier of the Future Alberta

The first Premier of what would eventually become Alberta was Frederick W.G. Haultain, Premier of the North-West Territories (which before 1905 included present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta). Initially there was no Premier of the Territories, nor even any democracy; the region was a veritable colony of Ottawa, ruled by a federally appointed governor and council. The march toward representative government began with the North-West Territories Act of 1875, which promised to establish electoral districts in the Territories where numbers (of white male settlers) warranted.[1] The Act pledged that when the number of elected representatives in the council reached 21, it would be dismantled and replaced by a legislative assembly, a milestone that was attained in 1888, when the Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories was created.

One of the members of the Assembly was the incomparable Haultain. Born in England in 1857, Haultain came to Ontario with his family as a young child. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto in 1879, he studied law at Osgood Hall in Toronto and was called to the Ontario Bar in 1882 and the North-West Territories Bar in 1884, the year he moved to Fort Macleod, where he practiced law. He was elected to the Territorial Council in 1887 and became an outstanding member of the Legislative Assembly and chairman of its advisory council (a quasi-Cabinet). Frustrated with the council's powerlessness, he resigned from it in 1889, but his agitation forced Ottawa to amend the North-West Territories Act in 1891. Although the amended Act offered hope for greater democracy, it did not clearly define the powers of the advisory council and how it would be appointed. The Legislature therefore formed an executive committee that would be responsible to the Assembly, and, predictably, Haultain was made its chairman. In practice the committee exercised more power than had the old advisory council—it was thus closer to a true Cabinet—and Haultain, as the head of the committee, became what amounted to an unofficial Premier of the North-West Territories.[2]

In 1892 Haultain convinced Ottawa to allow the Territorial Assembly to decide the dispersal of increased federal grants. It was a remarkable achievement, but Haultain was not satisfied and took up the struggle for responsible government, a government in which the governor would only act upon the advice of a Cabinet having majority support in the Assembly. Such a government was granted in 1897, and Haultain became the official Premier of the North-West Territories, and thus the first Premier of what would become the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

It was "the biggest victory to date," commented Grant MacEwan, but the Territorial government still could not borrow money or charter railways and lacked control over its natural resources, unlike the original provinces of Confederation. As a result, Haultain's government, facing heavy demands for services from a growing population, was always strapped for cash. The solution appeared to be provincehood, which would give the region more economic power and a stronger case for improved federal grants. Humorously, the *Regina Leader* explained: "Our autonomy demand was never due to any grievous lack of home rule; it was due to a grievous lack of money."[3]

In a lengthy speech delivered to the Assembly in 1900, Haultain formally launched the campaign for provincial status, but the federal Liberal government was cool to the idea. However, in 1902 the federal Conservatives endorsed Haultain's cause, and a groundswell of popular support for provincial autonomy bubbled up within the Territories, thanks in no small part to Haultain's leadership. Frustrated with the waffling of the federal Liberals, the *Calgary Herald* warned that "the conduct of the administration at Ottawa is quite sufficient to raise another rebellion in the North-West Territories."[4]

Afraid of the political consequences of continued inaction, Prime Minister Laurier promised that if his government were returned in the 1904 general election, provincial status for the Territories would be granted. Then Haultain made a mistake that would be his downfall. Favouring the Conservatives, and believing their pledge to bestow provincehood was more reliable than the Liberals' deathbed conversion, Haultain openly campaigned for the Tories. Unhappily for him, the Liberals won, and they would prove less than sympathetic to him personally and to his ideas about the form that provincial status should take.

Although obligated to grant provincial autonomy, Laurier had been vague about the details, and a number of questions had to be answered. One was, how many provinces would there be? Haultain emphatically argued that there should be but one province; it would be cheaper to administer than two or more provinces. More to the point, he knew that a single province would have more political clout than two provinces; it could present a solid western front against Ottawa. For that very reason, Laurier wanted more than one province. He did not want to face protests from a large, united province, especially if Haultain were its Premier. He feared that the population of a single prairie province would one day outstrip that of Ontario or Quebec and upset the balance of Confederation—enough to make any central Canadian politician quiver with revulsion.

Another key question was, would control of natural resources be handed over to the new province(s)? Haultain was adamant that it must be. If it were not, provincehood would be a farce. The Laurier government was equally determined that Ottawa must maintain its authority over land and resources. If it did not, how could the federal government efficiently orchestrate the settlement and development of the West in the interests of the Dominion?

The most contentious question, in eastern Canada at least, was, what kind of school system would be created? Haultain's answer was unambiguous: under the British North America Act, education was a provincial matter; Ottawa had no business trying to legislate school policy. Under his leadership, the Territorial Assembly had ended the denominational school system and had firmly placed separate schools under state control, and he was adamant that the federal government must not attempt to impose a new arrangement. On the other side of the debate, Laurier reasoned that if he restored church-controlled, denominational schools in the West, he could recoup political support he had lost from Quebec Catholics over such incidents as the Boer War.[7]

The last question to be answered was, would provincehood mean a continuation of non-partisan politics, or would it introduce party politics? Although a supporter of the federal Conservative Party, Haultain had always led a non-partisan administration; there had been no political parties in the Territorial Legislature, and he had always balanced his Cabinet with Liberals and Conservatives. He hoped that this situation would be continued after provincehood; it would prevent useless partisan squabbles and encourage prairie politicians to fight together for western interests.

Such a unified, pro-western, anti-Ottawa voice Laurier did not want, and he knew that if there were more than one political party in the prairie West, the region would be less likely to oppose Ottawa as a unit, since western opposition parties would generally oppose the governing parties (and, of course, provincial Liberals would be nice to the federal Liberal Party). Additionally, provincial Liberal supporters could establish machinery that would help the federal Liberals in the next election.

In the end, most of these questions were answered in ways that Haultain did not approve. First, the Laurier Liberals decided that two provinces, Alberta and Saskatchewan, rather than one big province, would be carved out of the North-West Territories, partly because two provinces would provide more patronage opportunities for the federal Liberals than a single province.[8] Second, land and resources were kept firmly under Ottawa's control and would remain so until 1930, although the new provinces would receive generous compensation. Third, Ottawa decided that Alberta and Saskatchewan would not determine their own school systems: Laurier gave Charles Fitzpatrick, his Catholic minister of Justice, the task of writing the educational clause in the Autonomy Bills to create Alberta and Saskatchewan. Predictably, Fitzpatrick's clause appeared to reinstate the independent Catholic system of the 1880s. This was too much for Laurier's minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, who resigned in protest, prompting Laurier to back down. The school clause that was finally adopted more or less preserved the status quo—the Territorial school system that Haultain had shaped. In that he could take some satisfaction.

He could take no satisfaction, however, in the outcome of the debate about the nature of politics in the new provinces. That debate was effectively ended when Laurier appointed Liberal lieutenant-governors for both Saskatchewan and Alberta, and those lieutenant-governors—predictably—called on Liberals to form the first administrations. Party politics had thus been introduced into the new provinces. The worst part was that Haultain, the outstanding figure of Territorial politics, and the obvious and rightful choice as Premier for one of the new provinces, had been deliberately passed over because of his Conservative leanings and opposition to Liberal plans for provincehood. It was an unfit and unjust ending for a man who had so effectively shepherded the North-West Territories, including the future Alberta, through their formative years.

He was not quite through with politics, however. In Saskatchewan he formed the

Provincial Rights Party, which, partly because of electoral corruption, was narrowly defeated by the Liberals in the December 1905 election and was defeated again in 1908 and 1912. Dispirited, Haultain left the political arena to become chief justice of the Superior Court of Saskatchewan, and in 1917 he became chief justice of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal. He died on January 30, 1942. He could have been and should have been a provincial Premier, perhaps of Alberta. Partisan politics, the very thing he had fought so hard to prevent in Territorial politics, had thwarted him.

The Premiers of the Province of Alberta

The following pages trace the careers of the twelve twentieth-century Alberta Premiers that followed Haultain. As Patricia Roome outlines, the first Premier of the province, Alexander Rutherford (1905–1910), was a somewhat naïve politician who promoted education and capital projects and became mired in a stunningly dramatic railway scandal that forced him to resign and gravely weakened the Liberal Party. David Hall demonstrates that Rutherford's successor, Arthur Sifton (1910–1917), the "Sphinx"—so-named because of his aloofness and chilly demeanour (in spite of a private sense of humour)—skilfully kept a divided party intact and passed progressive legislation, albeit sometimes reluctantly. As shown by Carrol Jaques, Sifton's replacement, Charles Stewart (1917–1921), was able, well-liked, and effectively responded to the demands of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) organization, but the UFA Party nonetheless swept his Liberals out of office in 1921.

According to David C. Jones, Herbert Greenfield (1921–1925), the first UFA Premier, was gracious and genial, but faced a congeries of seemingly irresolvable problems and lacked the toughness, gritty determination, and aggressiveness that the premiership sometimes requires. The second UFA Premier, John E. Brownlee (1925–1934), was better suited for the job. A lawyer—the very image of corporate Toronto—Brownlee, in Franklin Foster's estimation, was an extremely "competent" Premier who commanded great respect for his debating and political skills and scored major political successes, including gaining control of land and resources from Ottawa. Seemingly invincible, he was dethroned by a sex scandal. His shoes were filled by Richard Reid (1934–1935), the third and last UFA Premier. Bradford Rennie portrays Reid as a cautious Premier who could not do the impossible—end the Depression—and could not compete with the charisma and promises of William Aberhart (1935–1943), the leader of the Social Credit Party. Eccentric and authoritarian—a fascinating individual with "left-leaning fascist tendencies"—Aberhart presided over the most radical and controversial phase of Alberta's political history, as David Elliott reveals.

Upon Aberhart's death, his protegé, Ernest Manning (1943–1968), became Premier. Edward Bell demonstrates how circumstances prompted Manning to gradually modify his political philosophy and become an anti-socialistic free enterpriser, who nevertheless spent considerable sums on education and social programs. A highly respected and astute politician, he proved unconquerable: despite one close call he never lost an election in his quarter century as Premier. His dynastic heir was Harry Strom (1968–1971). A decent, down-to-earth man, Strom was unable, as John J. Barr relates, to provide strong leadership and do what he had been chosen to do: revitalize the Social Credit Party.

Moreover, his rather bland personality was no match for that of the dynamic, Kennedy-like Peter Lougheed (1971–1985), who, after bringing the Alberta Conservative Party back from the dead, defeated Social Credit. He then engaged in legendary battles with Ottawa over oil and gas and fashioned an interventionist state. With reason, Allan Tupper considers Lougheed to be Alberta's most successful province builder. Don Getty (1985–1992), who followed Lougheed as Premier, was maligned and increasingly unpopular. At the same time, he struggled against overwhelming economic odds and, in Mark Lisac's view, was made a scapegoat by his own party. His replacement, Ralph Klein (1992–), remained in power into the new millennium, thanks partly to an "ordinary guy" persona and formidable political and communications skills, which Doreen Barrie carefully details.

Patterns of Alberta Politics and the Premiers

Partly because of the Premiers, Alberta politics have been distinctive. Although individual parties have been in power for a long time in other provinces,[7] Alberta has had one-party rule for consistently longer periods of time than other provinces, and is absolutely distinct in electing four different parties one after another and never re-electing a defeated party. The Liberals ruled from 1905 to 1921, the UFA from 1921 to 1935, Social Credit from 1935 to 1971, and the Progressive Conservatives since 1971. This domination of single parties can be partly explained by the constituency system, which distributes seats to the winning party in numbers all out of proportion to the popular vote. The appearance of political consensus and homogeneity is therefore deceptive; in roughly half of Alberta's elections more than half the voters cast a ballot against the party that won.

Another reason for the dominance and longevity of single parties in Alberta is the success of Premiers, especially those starting with Aberhart, in convincing voters that the real "enemy" lies in Ottawa and that a strong, united front against the federal government is required to protect the province's interests. A further reason is that most Premiers have had non-partisan tendencies or portrayed themselves as non-partisan.[8] The non-partisan approach to politics was established by Haultain's administrations, which were non-party governments. Subsequent factors strengthened the credibility of the non-partisan approach in Alberta, including the Great Waterways Railway scandal of 1910, which suggested that the Liberal Party, and by extension the party system, was corrupt; the agitation of the agrarian Non-Partisan League, which sought to elect a non-party "business administration" and won two seats in the Alberta Assembly in 1917; the split in the Liberal Party over conscription in World War I, which weakened Liberal unity and loyalties; the subsequent formation of the federal Union government, which was supposed to rise above party politics; the large proportion in Alberta of American settlers, who lacked allegiance to the Canadian parties and were inclined to support political alternatives; the entry into politics in 1919 of the United Farmers of Alberta organization, which, because of its democratic ideals, refused to consider itself a party and insisted it was a political movement—an industrial organization in politics.

All these elements, combined with the non-partisan rhetoric of many of Alberta's Premiers, moulded, over the years, a non-partisan political culture. It was significant that

Social Credit swept the UFA government out of power in 1935 by depicting itself as a new non-party political movement. All the UFA Premiers and the Social Credit Premiers tended to paint themselves as non-partisan, but even Liberal and Conservative Alberta politicians have generally recognized, as did Peter Lougheed, that "the more non-political, the more apolitical a person is, the better chance he has of winning."[9] By appealing to Albertans' non-partisan leanings and posing as defenders of Alberta's rights against Ottawa, Alberta Premiers have reinforced the idea that a strong political opposition within Alberta is not necessary. In so doing they have often kept their parties in power for long stretches of time.

Several Alberta Premiers—most notably Sifton, Brownlee, Aberhart, Manning, Lougheed, and Klein—kept their parties in power also by projecting an attractive personal image (or at least commanding the respect of their party and the public), by preserving party unity, and by effectively responding to (and sometimes cultivating) public opinion. In short, they were highly skilled politicians. Some of these men, especially Aberhart and Lougheed, were excellent political organizers. Some were blessed by weak political opponents. Some were fortunate: Brownlee, Manning, Lougheed, and Klein were given credit for good economic times. Some seemed to "fit" the times. Aberhart was an ideal "saviour" for the Great Depression; Lougheed was the personification of the new urban, forward-looking Alberta; Klein was the perfect "everyday guy" for an electorate fed up with elitist politicians.[10]

The less successful Premiers—those who lost elections, lost electoral support, or fell out of favour with their parties—were often unlucky. Charles Stewart faced the rising tide of the agrarian revolt, which few if any Liberals could have headed off. Herbert Greenfield had to cope with an onerous debt load, environmental disaster, and intractable labour unrest. Richard Reid inherited a discredited party and was blamed for the Depression. Don Getty was in office during a sharp recession.

Some less successful Premiers contributed to their political demise. Rutherford showed poor judgement and failed to control his party. Greenfield was ill suited to the thrust and parry of political life and appeared indecisive. Strom failed to take forceful action, was a bad public speaker, and seemed old fashioned—a deadly image in the late 1960s. Getty's media relations were not good. Whatever the reasons for their political difficulties, three of the less successful Premiers—Rutherford, Greenfield, and Getty—saw a weakening of their parties; three others—Stewart, Reid, and Strom—presided over the destruction, or near destruction, of their parties.

Successful or unsuccessful, Alberta's Premiers have expressed two main leadership styles: populist and managerial, the latter referring to a commitment to efficient, business-like government. Both styles stem partly from the non-partisan tradition—the notion that Premiers should avoid partisan preoccupations—while prairie populism was born in the early agrarian movements.[11] In Alberta, populist Premiers and populist parties have often appeared in difficult or uncertain times. It is as if Albertans have wanted a man or party of the people—someone or something to identify with and offer hope—when things are bad or unsettled. Thus, the UFA, soon-to-be headed by a dirt farmer, Herbert Greenfield, was elected during the social and economic unrest of the post-World War I period; Social

Credit, led by the fiery preacher, William Aberhart, came to power in the middle of the Great Depression; Ralph Klein became Premier after years of economic stagnation, depressed oil prices, and heavy deficits. The more managerial-type Premiers (Rutherford, Sifton, Brownlee, Manning, Lougheed) usually (though not always) appeared and maintained their rule in more stable economic and social climates.

If the past is any indication, non-partisan, populist and managerial Alberta Premiers will continue to be elected and lead parties (and will continue to slam Ottawa) for lengthy periods of time until those parties are decisively defeated and replaced by new dynasties.

Bradford J. Rennie
Calgary, Alberta
May 2004

Notes

The author thanks Doreen Barrie, David Hall, and Brian Mlazgar for their perceptive comments on an earlier draft of this introduction.

1. The provision was that electoral districts would be established where there were 1,000 white men in a 1,000 square mile district.
2. Grant MacEwan, *Frederick Haultain: Frontier Statesman of the Canadian Northwest* (Saskatoon: Western Prairie Producer Books, 1985), 41, 50, 55, 67; Leslie A. Pal, "The Political Executive and Political Leadership in Alberta," in Allan Tupper and Roger Gibbins (eds.), *Government and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 5–6.
3. MacEwan, 105; Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 239.
4. Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 130.
5. There is scholarly debate about exactly what Laurier's motives were in this controversy. See Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 240–41.
6. L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905–1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 19.
7. For example, the Liberal Party was in power in Quebec from 1897 to 1936.
8. See Pal, "The Political Executive," 3–20.
9. Pal, "The Political Executive," 19.
10. The author is indebted to Doreen Barrie for some of the points in this paragraph.

The Liberal Premiers 1905-1921

Alexander C. Rutherford 1905-1910

PATRICIA ROOME

Alexander C. Rutherford, 1905–1910

Introduction

Alexander Cameron Rutherford earned many titles during his long public career, but Alberta's first Premier and the chief architect of the province preferred one: Dr. Rutherford, the father of the University of Alberta. A lawyer, politician, and educational administrator, Rutherford devoted half a century of public service to Alberta and Edmonton. Moving west from Ottawa to Edmonton in 1895, Rutherford founded a law practise and entered the North-West Territories Legislative Assembly in 1902. Pushed by his colleagues, the inexperienced politician reluctantly accepted the leadership of the Liberal Party, becoming Alberta's first Premier in 1905. Rutherford led this young and unwieldy party to two landslide victories. Personal defeat came as quickly as success. Railway politics, Calgary and Edmonton rivalries, and personal ambitions ended his political career in 1913. For the next 30 years, Rutherford championed the cause of higher education, a project "nearest to his heart's desire."[1] His greatest satisfaction came from serving on the Senate and as Chancellor of the University of Alberta. An obedient public servant, Rutherford was never an unequivocal visionary. His dream for Alberta had limits: it included neither radical economic reforms nor the political participation of women.

Early Years

Rutherford's legacy of public service rested on the traditional nineteenth-century foundation of family, religious faith, education, and Liberal connections. Born on February 2, 1857, to recent Scottish immigrants Elizabeth Cameron and James Rutherford, young Alexander spent the early years of his life with four brothers and sisters on a dairy farm south of Ottawa, heartland of a prosperous community of Scottish Baptists like the lumber baron and future Liberal Senator, William Cameron Edwards.[2] Inspired by his father's Baptist faith and his commitment to education and community service, Alexander enrolled in the Canadian Literary Institute, a Baptist college in Woodstock, Ontario, in 1874.[3] Following graduation in 1876, Rutherford taught for one year in Osgoode near his home before attending McGill University. With degrees in arts and civil law awarded in 1881, Rutherford joined the Ottawa law firm of Scott, McTavish, and McCracken. Later, when reflecting on this apprenticeship, Rutherford praised his mentor Sir Richard Scott, Secretary of State in Wilfrid Laurier's first Liberal Cabinet, whom he described as an "astute lawyer and statesman."[4]

Called to the Ontario bar in 1885, Rutherford worked for the next decade with the firm of Hodgins, Kidd, and Rutherford in Kemptville, 55 kilometres south of Ottawa. Rutherford joined numerous community organizations, including the Kemptville Baptist Church; but his loyalties lay in Ottawa where every week he visited his financée, Mattie Birkett, daughter of a prominent Ottawa Liberal family. Rutherford's keen interest in politics is captured in his surviving correspondence with Mattie. "I noticed in the papers that there is great excitement over the Riel debate in Ottawa," he scribbled on March 13, 1886. "The galleries are crowded. Have you been up yet? We will have to go some evening when I go to Ottawa. I am missing everything here."[7] Their correspondence chronicles a busy social life in Kemptville and Ottawa and reflects the evolving career of a young lawyer with liberal religious principles.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (B 10159)

The Rutherford family, December 17, 1898.

In November 1886 Rutherford traveled by train to British Columbia to investigate the disappearance of his cousin and a Mr. Robertson, who both owned farms at the mouth of the Fraser River. "The scenery through the Rocky Mts. is grand. I have never before seen anything like it," he wrote to Mattie. "Part of the way there was snow two or three miles deep."[8] The snow tunnels amazed the Ontario traveller, as did the energy and diversity of people on the West Coast. Victoria's climate impressed Rutherford, who mildly observed: "There are a great many Celestials here. We went through their part of the city yesterday. They are a hideous looking lot. We were shown through their church or temple," which was "gorgeous."[9] Later Rutherford confided to Mattie: "A great many think that the Chinaman had a hand in doing away with my cousin and Robertson."[10] Always a moderate, Rutherford was not certain. His companion stayed to operate one of the farms, but Rutherford decided against residency, although he found the climate "very agreeable."[11]

While Vancouver did not become Rutherford's home, his abiding interest in the West remained. In December 1888 he married 23-year-old Mattie, with whom he would have a son, Cecil Alexander, in 1890 and a daughter, Hazel Elizabeth, in 1893. Although prosperous and successful in Ontario, Rutherford believed western Canada promised greater business and professional opportunities. When he traveled to South Edmonton in 1894, everything seemed perfect for a move. The small frontier community needed a lawyer, and the climate provided relief from his chronic bronchial condition. In June 1895 Rutherford moved to Alberta with a reluctant wife and a young family.[12]

The frontier community of South Edmonton, incorporated as Strathcona in 1899 and linked by bridge to its northern rival of Edmonton in 1902, welcomed the Rutherford family. They joined the leadership elite, an ambitious group of Ontario settlers that included newspaper publisher Frank Oliver, Edmonton mayor Matt McCauley, and Strathcona businessman and mayor, Robert Ritchie.[13] The twin northern communities of Strathcona and Edmonton boomed in the years before 1905. Wealth came from many sources: outfitters equipped over 1,500 travellers for the Overland Trail to the Klondike in 1897 and 1898; businesses served immigrants who came to settle the surrounding agricultural districts. Exciting times for a man of action like Rutherford, who bought property, built a house, and settled his family within a month of their arrival. Just as quickly, he opened a law office, acquired clients, became the secretary treasurer and solicitor for the town of Strathcona, and joined the Strathcona Baptist Church where he served as deacon, trustee, and auditor. Following his interest in education, he accepted a position as secretary treasurer of the South Edmonton School Board and soon created prizes for top graduating students. His law practise prospered, evolving into a partnership with Frederick C. Jameson in 1899. Along with this successful law practise, Rutherford's shrewd business investments brought financial security for his family.

Political Involvement

Over the next years, Rutherford's political ambition and public prominence presented challenges for his quiet and shy wife, who preferred private life, family, and friends. By 1905 Rutherford had served on the executive of almost every Strathcona volunteer organization plus made time to compete in and win numerous athletic events. Raising his children was not a priority for Rutherford. Men of his generation and social class delegated family responsibilities to their wives, a division of labour that Rutherford found quite acceptable. Mattie raised the children and hosted weekly "at home" events. She traveled to Ontario with the children for summer vacations. Their second daughter, Marjorie, born in 1904, died tragically at 16 months of age from pneumonia. While his wife grieved, Rutherford committed even more time to public service.

A man with a mission, Rutherford's legal skills and conciliatory approach, his commitment to service, and his administrative talents impressed the citizens of Strathcona. Recruited as candidate in the 1896 by-election, Rutherford battled Matt McCauley, Edmonton's first mayor, for a seat in the North-West Territories Legislature. Defeated but not discouraged, he opposed McCauley in 1898, lost again, but won in 1902. Rutherford found that Edmonton's political culture challenged the Liberalism he had absorbed in the Ottawa Valley. Development issues dominated his first election address circulated to the Edmonton district electors in 1896, the year Wilfrid Laurier and the federal Liberals upset the long-standing Conservative government. Proclaiming himself "your obedient servant," A.C. Rutherford identified with the political agenda of his new home: a tradition of non-partisanship in Territorial politics, demands for greater financial autonomy from the federal government for the North-West Territories, and calls for provincial status for western Canada. During the 1898 campaign, Rutherford adopted a non-partisan stance, a position advocated by F.W.G. Haultain, Premier of the North-West Territories, who believed that party politics would hinder the Territorial government's negotiations with the federal government in Ottawa.

Although Rutherford became the president of the Strathcona Liberals in 1900, he contested the 1902 election as an independent candidate. During this campaign, Rutherford supported the creation of two provinces, insisted upon increased federal development money for infrastructure and services, and endorsed the popular western cause of removing the Canadian Pacific Railway's tax exemption. Like Premier Haultain, Rutherford watched as increased immigration to Western Canada produced rapid rural and urban growth and economic development. Pressure to provide schools, bridges, roads, and other public works strained the Territorial government's limited financial resources. The Territorial government could not meet these new, heavy financial obligations given inadequate federal government grants and numerous restrictions on local taxation. Legislators chafed at Ottawa's retention of the right to charter and profit financially from local railways. Winning this exciting election changed Rutherford's life, quickly providing him with leadership opportunities.[illegible]

For the next three years, as the Edmonton district MLA in the North-West Territorial Legislative Assembly, Rutherford served on standing committees that matched his interests. Elected as deputy speaker, he became a valued member of the emerging Liberal group, but was never fully trusted by federal Liberals such as Frank Oliver, Laurier's future minister of the Interior, and Edmonton Liberal MP Peter Talbot, who would receive a Senate appointment in 1906.[illegible] Problems quickly arose for western Liberals like Rutherford who publicly supported full provincial status. The 1905 Autonomy Bills to establish the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan disappointed the Liberals by leaving control over public lands and natural resources with the federal government. Likewise, an educational controversy developed over Catholic and French-language rights in the schools of the soon-to-be created provinces. This led to the resignation of western Liberal Clifford Sifton from Laurier's federal Cabinet. Rutherford, who did not support religious schools, learned from this bitter controversy and later worked tirelessly to establish a non-sectarian university in Alberta.

The Premiership

With two new provinces about to be formed on September 1, 1905, both federal and Territorial Liberal politicians scrambled to construct Liberal Party structures. The backroom machinations of Prime Minister Laurier throughout the spring and summer of 1905 finally bore fruit.[illegible] On July 25 Liberal MLA George Bulyea accepted the position of Lieutenant-Governor, while Alberta Liberals selected Rutherford as party leader at their Calgary convention on August 17, 1905. Neither Prime Minister Laurier nor Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea initially favoured Rutherford's appointment, but for a variety of reasons their preferred candidates, men like Peter Talbot, declined the nomination for party leader. Surveying the Alberta Liberal candidates, Talbot warned Rutherford: "You will find lots of trouble, but I think that you are the man to smooth matters out."[illegible] Talbot felt that Rutherford could unite the Liberal Party. Although Rutherford was neither innovative nor dynamic, he had few enemies. A reluctant Rutherford agreed. Two weeks later Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea named him Alberta's first Premier.

Local newspapers praised Rutherford for his "modest and retiring disposition," commenting that wise friends had pushed him to serve as leader.[illegible] They knew Rutherford, always "your obedient servant," would give this demanding position his best. Whereas more experienced politicians questioned the difficult task that lay ahead, Rutherford stepped into the leadership vacuum willing to build a political party and a new province. However, his solid contributions as Premier over the next five years would not guarantee his political future. Ultimately, the Herculean task proved impossible given Rutherford's temperament, his political inexperience, and opposition from powerful federal and provincial Liberals. By 1910 the Liberal legislative team would appear to him as "a nest of traitors."[20]

Blissfully unaware of the woes awaiting him, Rutherford threw his energies into the whirlwind of fall activities. As a member of the Inaugural Ceremony Committee, he assisted with plans for the celebration of the province's birth on September 1, 1905. Governor General Earl Grey and Prime Minister Laurier personally attended the gala party at the Edmonton Exhibition Grounds. Edmonton, named as the capital in the Alberta Act, celebrated in style and lavished its affection on Premier Rutherford. On September 2 citizens greeted the new Premier at his home with a torchlight procession and a bonfire; and with music, speeches, and eulogies they initiated a new political era.[21] Rutherford barely had time to enjoy their attention.

On September 6 he announced the first Cabinet; it included Charles Wilson Cross as the Attorney General and himself as Provincial Treasurer and minister of Education. Joining these Edmontonians was former Calgary mayor and wealthy businessman William H. Cushing as minister of Public Works. Lethbridge's former mayor and now MLA, William Thomas Findlay, became minister of Agriculture and Provincial Secretary, and Dr. George G. DeVeber became minister Without Portfolio. Drawn primarily from Ontario's Protestant business and professional elite, this Cabinet reflected the province's regional and development ambitions rather than its ethnic, class, and gender diversity, important forces that were gathering strength to challenge the Liberal Party's monopoly on political power.[22]

The Liberals won a landslide victory in the November 9, 1905, provincial election, securing 23 of the 25 seats to begin the long-standing Alberta political tradition of one-party dominance.[23] Rutherford deserved little credit for this victory, since federal MP Peter Talbot had served as the Liberal strategist.[24] Furthermore, the Liberal Party's control over patronage and its organizational advantages won the election. Despite the Conservative Party's debate over the contentious terms of the Alberta Act, issues disappeared in the bitter and personal campaign, which focused on the new Conservative Party leader, Richard Bedford Bennett. Although an eloquent speaker and a future Canadian Prime Minister, Bennett was an obvious target. This wealthy Calgary corporate lawyer represented the unpopular eastern-based Canadian Pacific Railway.

On March 15, 1906, the crowd of 4,000 well-dressed citizens attending the opening of Alberta's first Legislature welcomed the inexperienced MLAs and listened to Premier Rutherford deliver one of his many uninspired speeches. Outside of the public eye, Premier Rutherford took control of this group, intent on creating solid administrative foundations in Alberta consistent with Canadian traditions. Biographer D.R. Babcock argues that these tasks brought out the best in Rutherford, who "played a central role in the first Legislature," although L.G. Thomas, the historian of the first Liberal government, sees these accomplishments as unremarkable, following "a sedate norm."[25] Over the next three years, the hard-working Premier held the Cabinet positions of minister of Education and Provincial Treasurer, served as a member on nine Standing Committees, and introduced over 40 bills. Most of the bills generated little controversy except for those to create the University of Alberta, to launch the Alberta government telephone system, and to tax corporations, especially the CPR, in order to provide the new province with badly needed

Assembly
Edmonton, May 9/06)

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (B 6663)

Alberta's first Legislative Assembly, March 15, 1906. Front left is Lieutenant-Governor George Bulyea; front centre is the Honourable Alexander Cameron Rutherford, Premier of Alberta.

revenue for public education, transportation, and utilities. The latter initiative sparked a lengthy court battle led by R.B. Bennett, who won a 1911 Privy Council ruling, which declared corporate taxation a federal power.

Rutherford's main contribution came through his work as minister of Education. After serving for nine years as secretary treasurer of the Strathcona School Board, he continually strove to improve the provincial school system. His influence on Alberta's elementary and secondary schools lay in "school organization, curriculum, educational services, and school finances."[20] Like many liberals, Rutherford believed a proper education was fundamental for democratic citizenship. He sought to create a free public school system that guaranteed Albertans a minimum eight years of education and made Canadians out of Alberta's many immigrants. Rutherford assigned $200,000 from a total budget of less than $2 million for the rapid expansion of education in Alberta.[21] During the first year, his Department of Education approved 140 new schools, 14 to be located among the "Galicians," an inaccurate term for the Ukrainian community east of Edmonton. Rutherford hired Robert Fletcher to supervise these schools, which were intended to assimilate non-English-speaking immigrants. The essential components in Rutherford's educational vision were the rapid expansion of the public school system, a revised high school curriculum, free textbooks, commissioned and written for the province, higher teaching standards, a new provincial normal school and university, and a free public library system. His valuable personal library and rare collection of western Canadiana would later form the nucleus of the Rutherford Library at the University of Alberta. A real scholar, Rutherford understood the importance of history and of preserving documents. In 1908 he appointed a provincial archivist, the journalist and biographer Katherine Hughes, and created the Bureau of Archives.

The University Act of 1907 reflected Rutherford's determination to create a non-denominational and co-educational university. Ignoring the advise of Calgary Liberal MLAs, he located the new university in his Strathcona constituency. Although Rutherford did not benefit financially from this decision, this serious political error cost him support in his Liberal caucus, already angry about the location of the capital. Calgarians who responded with plans for their own university refused to welcome the new and talented University of Alberta president, Henry Marshall Tory, a McGill physicist chosen by Rutherford.[28] Ignoring this controversy, the Premier stubbornly forged ahead. He created the Rutherford Scholarship in 1908 as a permanent testimonial to his commitment to education and to acquiring government publications for the university library. These educational contributions earned Rutherford immediate recognition and honorary Doctorates of Law from the University of Toronto, McMaster University, and the University of Alberta. A final award from McGill University came in 1931.

The Rutherford government created one of the first government-owned telephone systems in Canada, a popular project spearheaded by Public Works minister Cushing, a conservative Calgary businessman who detested Bell Telephone's monopoly in Calgary and its symbolic representation of eastern capitalism. This project marked a significant departure from the Premier's customary cautious approach to government spending. Critics abounded. Senator Peter Talbot counseled Rutherford to use provincial monies on other public works initiatives such as roads and bridges. Scholars like L.G. Thomas have agreed, arguing that Rutherford's decision produced serious financial difficulties for the government, which in 1908 would be forced to issue debentures of $2 million at 4% for 30 years.[29] But Cushing believed that a government telephone system would service rural areas, ensuring continued support for the Liberals. In recognition of organized farmers' growing political power, the government allocated subsidies and grants for sugar beet producers, creameries, farmers' exhibitions, and agricultural societies. It also promised to build a pork packing plant if producers met certain conditions.[30] With such policies the Liberals courted rural voters, a political strategy that would become an Alberta tradition. Working-class Albertans found the Rutherford government callously indifferent to their situation and often openly hostile to organized labour.[31] A bitterly cold winter with record-low temperatures in 1906 produced coal shortages and an equally bitter labour conflict.[32] In response, the province created the Royal Commission on the Coal Mining Industry. Their 1907 report addressed working conditions and distribution problems in the coal industry, but failed to comment on the contentious issues of company stores, the incorporation of unions, wage legislation, and limitations to the working day. Although the Liberals passed the Workman's Compensation Act and established an eight-hour day for the coal miners in 1908, these minor concessions did not impress militant coal miners. In a 1909 by-election they elected by acclamation a Lethbridge labour candidate, Donald McNabb, later one of the founders of the Alberta Federation of Labo . Charlie O'Brien, organizer for the Socialist Party of Canada, won the 1909 Rocky Mountain constituency, which included the coal mining regions south to the Crowsnest Pass.[13] O'Brien outraged the Rutherford government when he proposed an amendment to its resolution of sympathy on the death of King Edward VII. Members threw books and inkwells at O'Brien for proposing that condolences also be extended to the wives and mothers of 300 coal miners who had lost their lives in a recent British mining disaster.[14]

Although the Rutherford government paid even less attention to women's issues, during his term women launched campaigns for suffrage and property rights.[15] Women coming from central Canada discovered to their dismay that Alberta did not have legislation giving married women dower rights to a portion of their husband's property. In 1886 the North-West Territories Real Property Act had abolished the dower law, giving male residents full opportunity to purchase and sell property unencumbered by prior claims. Furthermore, the 1872 Dominion Lands Act prevented married women from acquiring homestead lands independent of their husbands.[16] Nor could women vote in provincial elections prior to 1916. Ambitious, educated, and well-connected Alberta women challenged these legal and political handicaps. Rutherford's personal views on suffrage and women's property rights are difficult to assess. On the one hand he knew several women's rights leaders: Louise McKinney, president of the Canadian Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU); Henrietta Muir Edwards, Convener of the Law Committee for the National Council of Women; and Emily Murphy, writer and future judge. On the other hand Rutherford appointed an influential opponent of women's suffrage, Katharine Hughes, as his personal secretary in 1909.[17]

Feminists received a warm welcome, but little support from the Premier's office. Each year the Alberta WCTU faithfully but unsuccessfully petitioned the new Alberta government for consideration of women's issues. In 1905 Henrietta Muir Edwards, as Superintendent of the Alberta and Saskatchewan WCTU's Department of Equal Franchise and Christian Citizenship, optimistically requested "advanced legislation as regards women's rights in property, a measure of women's suffrage, and the recognition of a mother's parental rights and the raising of the age of consent." The next year the WCTU presented a petition signed by "700 prominent citizens." Convinced that government apathy demanded additional lobbying, Annie Bulyea, wife of the Lieutenant-Governor and the vice-president of the Alberta and Saskatchewan WCTU, met with Premier Rutherford. Later, a disappointed Edwards discovered that the Rutherford government had already passed legislation excluding dower rights, similar to ordinances of the North-West Territories.[18] In a subsequent interview Premier Rutherford encouraged Edwards to submit another petition. In 1909 she asked: "Would you kindly let me know if your government intends to take up the question of dower or its equivalent during the coming session, as was promised two years ago?" She also reminded the Premier and Attorney General Cross about former WCTU petitions and discussion regarding the Municipal Act and revisions to extend the franchise to married women owning property. An astute lobbyist and a fellow Baptist, Edwards exploited her personal connections. She cheerfully closed her letter by expressing the hope that she would "have the pleasure of seeing you during the winter when I visit my son." (Dr. William Muir Edwards, a McGill graduate, had recently been appointed as Professor of Engineering at the University of Alberta.) Premier Rutherford's son Cecil attended the University of Alberta in 1908 as a student of

Dr. Edwards.[39] Emily Murphy tried a different tactic and engaged the services of Conservative MLA R.B. Bennett to draft and propose a 1910 bill entitled An Act Respecting the Married Women's Property Act, a discouraging piece of legislation that perpetuated dependency of wives.

Ignoring women and labour activists, the Rutherford government focused its energies upon capital projects, especially railways. Their 1907 Railway Act signaled their willingness to use government resources to promote new railway construction. Bowing to intense public pressure, just prior to the 1909 election Rutherford created a new Department of Railways and launched a revitalized but fateful railway policy, one that guaranteed bonds and favourable interest rates for the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern. As minister of Railways, Rutherford further announced the creation of a new company, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway, destined to receive more generous government support. Ironically, Rutherford won praise for this policy and optimistically ran his 1909 election campaign on "Rutherford, Reliability, and Railways."[40] His Liberals won 37 seats in the contest, held on March 22, leaving a tiny opposition of four, composed of the socialist Charles O'Brien, an independent MLA, Edward Michener, and two Conservatives, R.B. Bennett and George Hoadley.

Despite heavy political commitments, Rutherford found time for his two other passions: religious service and financial speculation. He served as deacon of Strathcona Baptist Church, vice-president of the Dominion Lord's Day Alliance, and president of the Baptist Convention for Western Canada. Wealth generated from real estate purchases allowed Rutherford to build a cottage in Banff in 1908, purchase property near the new university in 1909, and commission architectural plans for a new mansion. As the Premier's wife, Mattie Rutherford kept a low profile, but accepted a position as honorary vice president of the Women's Educational Association, a forerunner of the University Women's Club. "At home" weekly receptions developed her reputation as a gracious but quiet hostess. Unlike the chatelaine of Government House, Annie Bulyea, Mattie Rutherford did not publicly support women's organizations or champion their campaigns.[41]

The End of Rutherford's Leadership

Despite the opening of the Legislature in February 1910 in elegant new buildings on Government Hill, trouble was brewing in the Liberal caucus. Within three months the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway (A & GW) crisis would produce the resignation of Rutherford and three members of his Cabinet. L.G. Thomas claims this crisis was "the critical episode in the political history of the province."[42] Few winners emerged during the shabby quarrel that ensued. Besides showing Rutherford's naïvety and unsuitability for politics, the conflict permanently weakened the Liberals. J.R. Boyle, angry at being denied a Cabinet position, and Conservative MLA R.B. Bennett joined forces with 12 other Liberal MLAs to harass the faltering Rutherford government. Ironically, Bennett would regret his role, which did not advance the Conservative Party in Alberta. He later explained to Rutherford's son that his father was an honest man, but over his head in politics.[43]

Even before the crisis struck, Premier Rutherford had exercised a tenuous hold on his ambitious caucus, who were obsessed with regional priorities and personal business agendas. Moreover, he had thoughtlessly taken the new, important portfolio of minister of Railways. Unwilling to delegate authority, Rutherford drew criticism from party politicians, especially Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea and Senator Talbot. Rutherford failed miserably at recognizing and promoting talent within his energetic caucus. Consistently favouring his own constituency and the city of Edmonton, he alienated Calgary MLAs. As Premier, Rutherford remained blissfully oblivious to the regional tensions within his party. Being a poor public speaker also hurt his popularity. Others questioned his commitment and loyalty to the Liberal Party, worrying about his non-partisan tendencies. In short, after five years many Liberal MLAs wanted a new leader, and the A & GW crisis provided the opportunity.

The crisis surfaced on February 27 with the resignation of W.H. Cushing, the Calgary minister of Public Works, who stated that he disagreed with the government policy of guaranteeing railways bonds, especially in regard to the contract with the A & GW. He had not signed this document, and he asserted that it had been negotiated without his knowledge or consent. Next, J.R. Boyle, MLA for Sturgeon, announced a resolution to expropriate the A & GW. During a late-night session and debate on February 28, Attorney General C.W. Cross and the Premier tried to defend the contract, but the eloquence of Conservative MLA Bennett's speech, which lasted from 5 to 11 p.m., left MLAs believing that either these men were incompetent or dishonest.[44] Rutherford handled the crisis poorly. Although the Premier promised to create a railway board, which would supervise the project and refuse to grant monies until the rail line was certified as complete, even his deputy minister would not cooperate. On March 9 Attorney General Cross, deputy minister S.B. Woods, and minister Without Portfolio W.A. Buchanan all resigned. When Rutherford refused to accept these resignations, dissident Liberal MLAs continued their attack on his Cabinet. Outside the Legislature, Liberal MP and *Edmonton Bulletin* publisher Frank Oliver, who sided with the insurgents, also worked against Rutherford.

Narrowly surviving a non-confidence vote on March 11, the Premier announced a royal commission to investigate the A & GW project. Even though the Royal Commission did not release its report until November, Rutherford had little choice but to resign immediately, which he did on May 26, 1910. The Liberal Party did not care about the Commission as Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea's outspoken criticism of the A & GW deal revealed. Expressing similar criticism, Senator Talbot, president of the Liberal Association of Alberta, insisted Rutherford resign. In any case, the report presented at best a "chilly and inconclusive verdict."[45] Judge Beck exonerated Rutherford and Cross, but judges Scott and Harvey criticized and questioned their judgment. In particular they condemned the lack of Cabinet consultation, although they agreed that neither Rutherford nor Cross had received any financial benefit from the A & GW contract. Based upon meticulous research, L.G. Thomas concluded that the A & GW crisis was "a test of strength between the central and local party organization." Premier Rutherford did not enjoy popularity in "the highest circles of liberalism." Nor did Bennett and the Alberta Conservatives play a shrewd political game. Rather than supporting the revolt, Bennett should have supported Rutherford and attempted to split the Liberal Party.[46] Although the A & GW contract was a bad bargain, private vendettas played the major role in Rutherford's demise.

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA ARCHIVES

Portrait of A.C. Rutherford, taken by Elliott and Frey, photographers in London, England, 1911.

The second Legislature reconvened on November 10, 1910, with Chief Justice Arthur L. Sifton as Alberta's second Premier. Rutherford, Cross, and Cushing now sat as backbenchers. A few Alberta and Ottawa Liberals in consultation with Lieutenant-Governor Bulyea had selected Sifton, a process that was "blatantly undemocratic."[47] Eventually Premier Sifton made peace with the warring factions in his party, reappointed Cross to the Cabinet, welcomed the rebel leader Boyle in December, and developed a new railway policy.

Historians have asserted the Liberal Party never fully recovered from the A & GW affair. Rutherford temporarily became an angry and hurt outsider, the classic victim. In the 1913 election, he opposed Premier Sifton's plan for confiscating the A & GW, refused to run as a Sifton Liberal, and threatened to support the Conservatives, which he did in the 1921 campaign. After representing Strathcona constituency for 11 years, Rutherford lost the election and ended his political career. He went on to serve as the Alberta Director of the National Service Commission from 1916 to 1918, and, after the war, he served on the Loan Advisory Committee of the Soldier Settlement Board, but his attention turned to other matters, including his law firm of Rutherford, Jamieson, and Grant.

Rutherford assumed new responsibilities at the University of Alberta with his election to the Senate in March 1911. He celebrated this honour by establishing the Rutherford Gold Medal in English, an annual University of Alberta prize awarded to the senior honours English student achieving the highest standing. On May 9 of the following year, the Rutherfords hosted a tea for the graduating class in their new mansion, Achnacarry, named after the ancestral Scottish castle of the Cameron clan. The "Founder's Day Tea" quickly became a tradition at convocation ceremonies. On an informal basis the Rutherfords opened Achnacarry and its remarkable library to many students over the years. Elected Chancellor of the University of Alberta on May 27, 1927, Dr. Rutherford held this position until his death in 1941, attending his last convocation just before he died in June. During this period he awarded over 5,000 degrees, an honour he valued highly. Rutherford hosted many other organizations at Achnacarry, notably the Alberta Historical Society, serving as president from 1917–1941. After Rutherford's death, his fine collection of Canadiana, which his son and daughter inherited, was partially donated to,

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NC 6-1028)

Rutherford House, c. 1913.

and partially purchased by, the University of Alberta in 1951, and the Rutherford Library was established in his honour.

Rutherford House became an important cultural centre, enjoying a prime location adjacent to the University of Alberta campus.[11] Many Edmontonians remember attending some of the special events held there, such as the gala celebration on December 19, 1938, the occasion of the Rutherfords' golden wedding anniversary. As a fitting tribute to the couple's hospitality, Rutherford House was purchased, restored, and made a historic site in 1974, an important monument to the former Premier's commitment to his beloved University and the city of Edmonton. After returning to private life, his law practice and the University occupied Rutherford fully. In the 1920s his son Cecil Rutherford and son-in-law Stanley Harwood McCuaig both joined the successful law practice. In semi-retirement, Rutherford enjoyed time with his grandchildren, university students, education, volunteer organizations, and his outstanding garden. On June 11, 1941, Alexander Cameron Rutherford passed away, less than a year after his wife Mattie's death on September 13, 1940.

Colleagues, friends, and historians viewed Rutherford as an unlikely politician, an unexpected leader, and an unusual Premier. Echoing Rutherford's critics, historian L.G. Thomas, a University of Alberta graduate who attended one of the May convocations and Founder's Teas, concluded that he was a man of "very modest abilities" who had "no talent whatsoever for debate." Biographer D.R. Babcock extends greater sympathy to Rutherford, portraying him as a nineteenth-century "Gentleman of Strathcona," a man of rare character who showed a gentle earnestness that always impressed his colleagues, friends, and even his political enemies.[40] As "your obedient servant," Rutherford never enjoyed political conflict and partisan struggles. His personal ambition combined with the ethic of service propelled him into Alberta politics. Hard work, honesty, and administrative skills earned him supporters both as an MLA and as Premier. A social conservative, Rutherford supported business interests and middle-class aspirations, either ignoring or minimizing the urgent demands of labour and women activists. To his credit, he took his political defeat remarkably well, gained wisdom as he aged, and launched another equally productive career, one that suited his temperament, his skills, and his passion for learning. Rutherford's educational contribution remains his ultimate legacy to Albertans.

Notes

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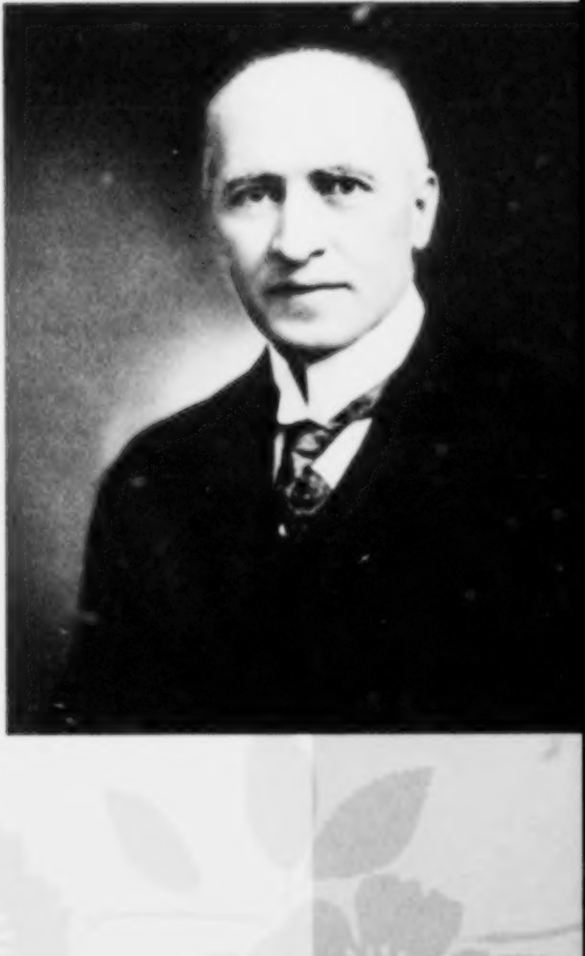
47. Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 148.

48. Babcock, *Alexander Cameron Rutherford*, chapter 6, "Achnacarry: Rutherford's House," 93–128.

49. Thomas, *The Liberal Party*, 131–33; Babcock, *Alexander Cameron Rutherford*, 134–35.

Arthur L. Sifton 1910-1917

DAVID HALL



Arthur L. Sifton, 1910–1917

Introduction

While supporting a Cabinet colleague during the Medicine Hat by-election of June 1910, the new Premier of Alberta sat in a club regaling his cronies with stories from his past as a lawyer and judge. One involved "an old professional juryman named Pete," a favourite of prosecuting attorneys because he invariably found the defendant guilty. "So we asked him one day, why they were always guilty," continued the Premier, "and he put it this way: 'Well,' he said, 'I never listen to the lawyers. They're hired by the different sides. I never listen to the witnesses, because some are agin the pris'ner, and the others are for him. But I just looks at the pris'ner, and I says to myself, "Pri'sner at the bar, if you hadn't done nothin' you wouldn't be there," and so I finds 'em guilty.'"[1]

Arthur Sifton loved a good story, especially when shared with a small group of trusted friends. It was a side of him that only infrequently emerged in his public persona. He was difficult to characterize. Bright and well educated for his day, he offered mainly platitudes when he spoke of liberal and conservative values. An effective public speaker, he normally avoided publicity and spoke so little to the press that he became popularly known as "the Sphinx." He sometimes gave the impression of being a bit of a dilettante, despite having been a Cabinet minister, a chief justice, and a provincial Premier.

Early Years

Arthur Lewis Watkins Sifton was born on October 26, 1858, in St. Johns (Arva), near London, Canada West. He was the second child and eldest son of John Wright Sifton (1833–1912) and Kate Watkins (1833?–1909). Though raised on a farm, and himself a farmer intermittently until the 1880s, John Sifton sought other ways to secure his fortune, including producing and refining oil at Oil Springs and Petrolia in Lambton County, Canada West, and eventually railway contracting. Arthur and his younger brother Clifford (b. 1861) were educated in various public schools and eventually at the private boys' school in Dundas before attending high school in London. A devoted Wesleyan Methodist, their father was committed to the Reform (later Liberal) Party politics of George Brown and Alexander Mackenzie. The Sifton household saw frequent gatherings of clergy, Methodist lay people, lawyers, businessmen, and politicians, creating a stimulating environment as issues were debated and plans were laid.

When John Sifton obtained contracts to build a telegraph and to undertake some preliminary construction on the future Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1874, he moved his family to Winnipeg. Arthur finished high school in Winnipeg, after which he went to Ontario with Clifford to attend Victoria College, a Methodist institution then located at Cobourg. Apparently he was not always the most serious of young scholars, winning a prize from his fellow students for being "intellectually, morally, physically and erratically preeminent in virtue and otherwise, especially otherwise." He nevertheless graduated with a

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA 21-3)

Calgary officials in 1892: Front row (left to right): R. Wesley Fletcher Orr, Mayor George Murdock, City Solicitor A.L. Sifton. Back row (left to right): R. Paddy Nolan, Police Chief Thomas English, Constable J. Fraser, Tom Lippincott, City Clerk James D. Geddes.

BA degree in 1880, and returned to Winnipeg where he started articling in the law office of Albert Monkman.

These were exciting years for a young man in Manitoba. An economic boom resulted from the construction of the CPR, which was opening new areas and creating new towns, including Brandon. John Sifton relocated to Brandon in 1881, hoping to profit from the soaring real-estate market. Arthur decided to abandon his law books and join his father. Ostensibly he was there to operate a Brandon branch of Monkman's law firm, although he had not yet qualified for independent practice. In September 1882 he married Mary H. Deering of Cobourg; the following August their daughter Nellie Louise was born. Sifton launched his political career by being elected to Brandon's first city council in 1882, serving through 1883. He briefly considered running for mayor in 1884 before concluding that he had insufficient support. In the midst of all this activity he found time to complete his legal training, and in the spring of 1883 he passed his barrister's examinations, though not those for attorney, and was called to the Manitoba bar. In June he became a full partner in his brother Clifford's law firm, now Sifton and Sifton.

The next chapter of his life is shrouded in mystery. His future in the growing town of Brandon seemed bright and secure, but in 1885 he dissolved his partnership with his brother and removed his family to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (NWT). Prince Albert was a town with a seemingly constrained future because the CPR line was located far to the south. It also lay near the centre of the recently failed North-West Rebellion. Possibly he and Clifford had a falling out, although they worked well together in subsequent years and seemed close as a family. At any rate, he was made a notary public in 1885 and was enrolled as an advocate the following year. Two years later Sifton earned his MA from Victoria College and LLB from the University of Toronto, an uncommon level of educational attainment for the time. Besides practising law in Prince Albert, he wrote for the local newspaper and made political connections that proved useful in the future.

Apparently because of his wife's health, in 1889 Sifton moved to Calgary. Here he seemed to settle into a fairly routine life as a lawyer: he opened a law office on Stephen Avenue, was appointed Queen's Council (QC) in 1892, and for a time worked in the office of the city solicitor, assisting in the incorporation of Calgary as a city in 1894. Later he became a partner in the firm of Sifton, Short, and Stuart and was a Crown prosecutor. His second child, Lewis Raymond St. Clair, was born in February 1898.[3]

Entry Into Politics

In the early 1890s prospects for a Liberal lawyer in Calgary were modest, at best. Economic growth was slow. It would not be unfair to say that the Calgary economy was dominated by the CPR and the surrounding ranching community—both bastions of Conservatism. The Conservative federal government ensured that its patronage went to loyal Tory barristers and solicitors.

That situation changed dramatically when the Liberals won the federal election in 1896 under Wilfrid Laurier. The new Prime Minister selected Clifford Sifton, attorney general of Manitoba since 1891, as the new minister of the Interior. As such, Clifford had the prime responsibility not only for settlement of the West but also for the welfare of the Liberal Party in that region. He relied heavily on Arthur for advice concerning the party in the Calgary area, and to settle a difficult election protest in Prince Albert. For his part, Arthur regularly plied Clifford with suggestions about patronage in Calgary and Banff, and even proposed his own appointment as chief justice of the Supreme Court of the North-West Territories. All that Clifford could manage at first was to arrange an occasional patronage job for Arthur, such as a retainer for a coroner's inquest in 1897.[4]

Perhaps because judgeships usually went to lawyers with proven ability who also had contributed significantly to the welfare of the ruling party, Arthur decided once more to take the plunge into politics, challenging the genial, popular long-time Conservative member of the Territorial Assembly from Banff, Dr. R.G. Brett, in the Territorial election of 1898. After some legal disputes over the results, Brett was unseated on the basis of corrupt practices, and Sifton won the ensuing by-election in June 1899.[5]

This by-election gave rise to one of the most repeated "Sifton" stories. Campaign meetings usually took the form of a debate. At one such meeting at the small town of Anthracite, Brett, who was notorious for being late, did not show up. The audience grew restive, and Sifton decided to give his speech. Still no Dr. Brett. Facing a murmuring audience, Sifton rose again and informed the audience that he had heard Dr. Brett's speech many times and that if they would permit he would tell them exactly what Brett would say were he there. He then proceeded to give the speech, with all the good doctor's stories, essentially verbatim. Sifton had nearly completed Brett's speech when the latter arrived in great haste, took the platform, and commenced his address. For some time he could not understand the bemusement of his audience.[6]

Having defeated the redoubtable Dr. Brett, Sifton was immediately one of the leading Liberals in the District of Alberta and soon was named president of the Alberta Liberal Association. However, the pay for an MLA was small, and he began to look for something more remunerative. His opportunity came in 1901 when his brother Clifford appointed James Hamilton Ross, public works commissioner and treasurer in the NWT government, as Yukon commissioner. F.W.G. Haultain, the Territorial Premier, believed in a non-partisan government for the Territories and had constructed a Cabinet to balance Conservative and Liberal representation. Ross, a strong Liberal, had to be replaced by a Liberal. On March 1 Haultain appointed Arthur Sifton to succeed Ross.

Sifton entered the NWT Cabinet at a pivotal moment. In 1897 the Laurier government had granted the NWT full responsible government, including the right to determine how the annual federal grant would be spent. However, the annual grant by no means kept up with the rapid growth of population and demand for roads, bridges, schools, and other facilities. This situation created economic distress for the local government and fuelled a strong popular movement for provincial autonomy for the NWT, a cause endorsed and encouraged by the Haultain government. Arthur Sifton embraced this cause as soon as he entered office, asking for supplementary federal grants to meet unforeseen expenses. He and Haultain went to Ottawa to seek better financial terms and eventual autonomy. Subsequently he was re-elected as a member of the Haultain ministry in the Territorial election of 1902.[7]

In September 1901 Clifford Sifton had offered the chief justiceship of the NWT to Arthur. However, the latter had thought it best not to accept, having just taken up his ministerial duties, while making it clear that in the long run he wanted the post. In January 1903 Chief Justice T.H. Maguire retired; it is quite possible that there had been some understanding that his tenure would be brief when he was appointed. At any rate, Arthur Sifton was sworn in as chief justice of the North-West Territories Supreme Court on January 13, a position he would occupy until September 1907, when he became chief justice of the Supreme Court of the new province of Alberta.

As had happened when he had been appointed to the NWT Cabinet, the Conservative press was predictably outraged. Arthur Sifton's elevation to the chief justiceship was denounced as crass nepotism, "the turning of the Judiciary into a part of the political machinery." He allegedly owed his position only to the influence of Clifford and not to any merit. Yet Arthur soon demonstrated that he was very able and more than willing to shoulder a heavy workload. In July 1903 he told Clifford, "I like the work better than I anticipated and most people appear to be satisfied now."

Although centred in Calgary, Sifton travelled a good deal hearing cases. Mostly he was in the southern Territories, but on occasion he went north to Red Deer and Edmonton. He was a very difficult justice for lawyers to "read." Sometimes he would sit impassively, smoking his trademark cigar. On other occasions he could respond quite differently. A story was told in the *Toronto Star* of two leading lawyers who were summing up their respective arguments in an important case, for which they had prepared extensively. Throughout, the chief justice seemed to be taking notes, writing steadily. When they had finished their orations, Sifton promptly delivered his judgment. The *Star* continued:

> Both lawyers were chagrined. They had expected that he would take at least three weeks to decide the grave points of law they had digged out of the pit. At the close of the court they were discussing the Chief Justice's flippancy when a court officer, passing, overheard them talking.
>
> "I can't imagine," said one, "what he was writing about."
>
> "No, nor I," said the other.
>
> "But I can tell you," interrupted the official, and he showed them a handful of torn papers, each of which contained, in whole or in part, the signature, 'Arthur L. Sifton—Arthur L. Sifton—Arthur L. Sifton.' He had made up his mind on the case before counsel commenced summing up, and had been practicing signing his name while they rounded off their respective arguments.

Sifton did record the essence of each case that he heard along with his decision. Rarely did he offer reasons for the decisions, which created some difficulties when cases were appealed. Not often, however, were his rulings overturned on appeal. Well known for the sort of instant decision noted above, he saw the law in severely practical terms. In the early years, his most common cases involved charges of horse or cattle theft; typically he sentenced cattle rustlers to three years' hard labour. His tough sentences apparently helped to reduce the frequency of livestock theft. He also heard many cases involving other forms of theft, burglary, forgery, disputes over debts, and various other issues concerning property. Every indication suggests that, while some lawyers disliked the rapidity of his decision making, he made few errors and earned respect. It seems likely that Sifton anticipated that he would continue in this position until his retirement in the indefinite future. A political earthquake in 1910 permanently altered these plans.

The Premiership

The Alberta and Great Waterways (A & GW) Railway scandal dominated Alberta politics in the late winter of 1910, deeply divided the provincial Liberal caucus, and soon destroyed Premier A.C. Rutherford's political career. Prime Minister Laurier, Senator Peter Talbot (president of the provincial Liberal Party), and Lieutenant-Governor G.H.V. Bulyea concluded that Rutherford must be sacrificed to save the provincial Liberal government, and that no one in the existing caucus had the strength to heal the divisions between pro-Rutherford and anti-Rutherford Liberals. A strong leader was required if Alberta Liberalism were to be salvaged because the *de facto* leader of the Conservative opposition, R.B. Bennett, by far the most dynamic orator in the province, was salivating at the thought of flogging the Liberals with the scandal if an election could be forced. "Possibly Chief

Justice only permanent solution," Bulyea telegraphed Laurier in mid-March. Exactly when or how Arthur Sifton was approached is not known. His more politically experienced brother Clifford advised against taking the position, but Arthur responded, "If it comes my way, I will."[10]

By May 17 he had agreed to step down as chief justice and assume the premiership. Nine days later the Legislature met, only to hear Bulyea announce Rutherford's resignation, Sifton's appointment as Premier, and—to the consternation of the opposition—the prorogation of the Legislature, which would give Sifton time to appoint a Cabinet, get himself elected, and consolidate his position. One of Rutherford's former Cabinet ministers, C.W. Cross, told Laurier: "The result of the acceptance of the Premiership by the Chief Justice is that the family quarrel in the Liberal party here is at an end."[11] Time would show that this optimism was somewhat misplaced.

Few Albertans had had any opportunity to form a strong impression of the new Premier. After only three or four years of active politics in the province, he had spent seven years as chief justice, a position suited to his mostly retiring personality. The historian L.G. Thomas has described Sifton's manner as "glacial and arbitrary." The reported coldness, dryness, occasional appearance of indolence, and retiring ways probably resulted in part from Sifton's less-than-robust health. For much of his life, he apparently had some sort of heart affliction, which certainly worsened in his later years and limited his energy. He was very private about such matters. To some degree he compensated with an incisive, logical mind and sharp wit. He spoke publicly much less than most prominent politicians. His reluctance to talk with reporters was noted early, even by those sympathetic to him; the Premier, noted the *Edmonton Bulletin*, "hangs out the 'silence' sign" when reporters are around.[12]

Because his new Cabinet strongly represented southern Alberta, Sifton decided to seek election in a more northerly riding, despite his long association with Calgary. The member for Vermilion resigned, and Sifton stood in the subsequent by-election, although he had little connection with this recently settled rural riding. Sifton's campaign speeches were short on specific promises, long on generalities, and dampened expectations for special benefits flowing to the constituency should he be elected. He simply promised to run the province in a businesslike manner, while remaining accessible to the public. "There were," he proposed, "three great functions which the government of this province were called upon to discharge and these were the development of its agricultural and mining resources and the transportation facilities." If this were achieved, the government would have "fulfilled all that the people could wish or expect of it."

The Conservatives decided to run a candidate against Sifton and soon accused the Liberal "machine" of debauching "the foreign vote" with beer, whiskey, and tobacco. The Liberals naturally denied the allegations. "Conservative speakers," claimed the *Bulletin*, "have frequently arraigned foreigners and imputed to them inferiority by alluding to the white vote." Such charges and countercharges were a constant refrain in Alberta politics before Sifton became Premier and throughout his time in office. As expected, in a light voter turnout on June 29 Sifton was elected by a comfortable majority.[13]

The new Premier was given a boost when the venerable Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA 3592-8)

Premier Arthur Sifton addressing a political meeting at Wetaskiwin, August 1910.

Laurier, made an extended tour of the West in the summer of 1910. Sifton accompanied him, spoke at every stop on Laurier's tour in Alberta, and greatly impressed the Prime Minister. According to the *Toronto Star*, Laurier "remarked Sifton as an oasis in the desert of Liberal leaders for the West," and the Alberta Premier was a distinct possibility for a future Laurier Cabinet.[14]

In 1911 the Laurier government's policy of reciprocity, or freer trade, with the United States dominated the national political agenda. Clifford Sifton was a prominent opponent of the proposed agreement, siding with the Conservative opposition of Robert Borden, but given the popularity of reciprocity amongst farmers in Alberta, Arthur Sifton would have no choice but to support it. Back from attending the coronation of George V, he announced in August that he would "give all possible aid" to the federal Liberal candidates in the province. This he did, claiming that reciprocity "is going to be a good thing for Alberta." In the midst of a decisive defeat in September for Laurier and reciprocity, Alberta returned pro-reciprocity Liberals in all constituencies except in Calgary, where R.B. Bennett was victorious. Sifton cannot have been unhappy at this result, for it largely removed the *de facto* leader of the Tories—a true thorn in the Liberal flesh—from the provincial scene.[15]

During Sifton's first term in office (1910–13), several issues predominated. First was the need to solve the A & GW Railway issue and develop a policy to expand the railway system within Alberta. Second, Sifton was faced with demands for the rapid development of a rural telephone system. Third, he was anxious to secure for the province control of its public lands and natural resources. Fourth, he had to take into account the rapidly rising strength of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and its lobbying for legislation favourable to the farming sector.

For 15 years the economy, population, and prosperity of western Canada had been expanding at an unprecedented rate. Early settlement in the Peace River country had demonstrated that agriculture was possible farther north than had previously been believed. No one foresaw any immediate end to this expansion. Like other successful politicians of his time, Sifton fuelled the optimism, claiming that the population of the province would reach 20 million. In 1911 he told a Lethbridge audience that "transportation and population" were the essentials for Alberta's progress and that "everybody … [should] boost and boost … so that this will be the banner province in the banner colony of the best Empire which this world has ever witnessed."[16]

At the same time, Sifton had to make a difficult decision about the A & GW project. He held his counsel until the commission appointed by the Rutherford administration to review the matter had reported, which happened late in 1910. Two of the three commissioners concluded that although corruption on the part of the late government had not actually been proven, "Rutherford and Cross [had] displayed negligence and gullibility in their handling of the A & GW business." Moreover, while the New York bond dealers and the railway promoters appear to have made a handsome profit selling A & GW securities in the London market, the company had made no serious effort to start the railway. Sifton concluded that the A & GW had failed to meet its contractual obligations, and he introduced legislation to seize for the province the $7.4 million that had been realized from the sale of bonds and deposited in the Royal Bank and two other banks. His intention was "to save the credit of the province" and ensure "a proper expenditure" of the money.

An instant outcry followed. Charles W. Cross, Liberal MLA for Edmonton and the former attorney general, assumed that Sifton was abandoning the project altogether and denounced the policy as a breach of faith with Edmonton and those who favoured northern development. Several of the dissident Liberals supported him. So much for there being a new spirit of unity amongst provincial Liberals. The second and ultimately much more serious line of attack came from R.B. Bennett, who at the time was not only a Conservative MLA but also the solicitor for the Royal Bank. The proposed legislation, he declared, "was highway robbery"; the province had no legal right to do what it proposed. The banks refused to pay, so the province sued for the money. The Alberta courts twice sustained the province, which persuaded the federal government not to disallow the legislation. However, after an appeal by the banks in 1913 the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England ruled that the Alberta government had exceeded its powers, intruding on the federal power to control banking; had it simply annulled the agreement, it would have been within its rights.[17]

Announced just before the 1913 legislative session and shortly before a provincial election, this decision could have been disastrous. However, a year earlier Sifton had announced a comprehensive railway expansion policy that proved to be very popular. The plan was to support construction of 1,813 miles of branch lines through provincial guarantees of railway bonds worth $31,005,000. While much of the construction was intended to serve regions to the west and east of the Calgary-Edmonton line, the most dramatic provisions were for the building of the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia (ED & BC) Railway to the Peace River country, and for a line from Athabasca Landing to Fort

McMurray to replace the A & GW scheme. Sifton expected that the Alberta government would never be called upon to pay; government guarantees were simply intended to enable the companies concerned to raise money at favourable rates on the international markets.

The plan to develop the ED & BC line was partly a response to a challenge from the government of British Columbia, which had announced plans to support construction of a line to the Peace River district of British Columbia and draw off the trade of the region to Vancouver. The intent of the Sifton government's financing policy was to produce actual construction; none of 15 railways chartered to build into the region had yet made any progress whatever.[18]

The Premier declared that he opposed government ownership and operation of railways, particularly given the limited population and financial resources of the province at the time. If the province were to construct the lines, as some in the opposition were advocating, progress would be very slow. The credit of the province could be used to leverage much faster construction to meet the expectations of new settlers, "the people who have come to Alberta for the purpose of building up homes for themselves" to improve "their standing in the world." Such people "are not prepared to wait 50 years, as their ancestors waited in Ontario." Sifton hoped that the government's plan, which supported a number of lines of the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific railways, would cause the CPR to accelerate its construction of branch lines to meet the competition. In 1912, with continuing prosperity and record immigration, Albertans generally applauded the government's seeming foresight. Relatively few thought the plans imprudent, and none knew that 1912 would mark the end of so many years of rapid expansion. If, with the benefit of hindsight, the Sifton government's plans "proved especially inept" (in the words of historian Bob Irwin), they did not appear so when the government sought a renewed mandate in 1913.[19]

Another form of transportation was experiencing dramatic growth as well: the automobile. By 1912 there were 2,500 licensed drivers in Alberta; in 1913, 3,733. Not all were merely weekend recreational drivers. As early as 1909 farmers were demanding properly drained, good-quality roads as vital to rural development. The Sifton government responded by appointing an engineer of highways and establishing a highways branch within the Department of Public Works. In 1913 the branch spent almost $644,000 on highways, which was over and above what local authorities were spending.[20]

Even more consuming of Sifton's time and government resources was the government telephone system, which the Rutherford government had created when it bought out Bell Telephone's operations in Alberta. It covered the province, except for Edmonton (which had its own publicly owned system). There was a constant growth in demand for service as settlers poured into the countryside and towns and cities expanded. Moreover, long-distance capacity was often inadequate. The system was under the supervision of the Department of Public Works, and then from 1912 was part of a newly created Department of Railways and Telephones, of which Sifton remained minister. The deputy of telephones in the new department, Bill Harmer, was essentially a political operative. According to Bob Edwards, the not-entirely-objective editor of the Calgary *Eye-Opener*, "when questioned in the house about [Harmer's qualifications for] the appointment Sifton merely answered that he had known Harmer for seventeen years." Historian L.G. Thomas believes that Harmer became "Sifton's chief henchman, the real controller of the [political] machine that made Liberal rule possible."[21]

The Liberal government intended to finance the system through the bond market and hoped to pay for it through charges to the consumer. In his first budget speech in 1910, Sifton noted that the rural phone system was being built at a small loss, but warned that it could not continue to be extended into more remote, sparsely populated areas. Early in 1912 Sifton told the press that the government had spent $1.5 million expanding the system in 1911, and that it would likely spend several million more, mainly to add new rural lines and upgrade the long-distance lines. In the fall of 1912, Sifton went to England where he successfully marketed $5 million of 4% bonds to finance the further growth of the rural telephone network. He boasted: "So far the rural phones have not only not cost the government anything but have yielded a handsome working profit."[22]

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (A.2685)

Premier Arthur Sifton (no date).

The telephone system may have made a profit on operations, but in general the province's financial resources were strapped because of rapid growth and the need for railway access to northern districts. Many Albertans believed that at least part of the solution would be for the province to control its own Crown lands and natural resources. In 1870 the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald had decided, when it created Manitoba, to keep control of lands and resources in order to facilitate the national project of western development. This arrangement had been continued when the Laurier government created the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905; ironically, it was Clifford Sifton who had persuaded the Prime Minister that the Dominion should retain control and pay the provinces a fixed compensation in lieu of lands. The resulting inequality of the prairie provinces within Confederation was a standing grievance. During the 1910 session of the Alberta Legislature, Alwyn Bramley-Moore, MLA for Lloydminster and "a Rutherford Liberal who enjoyed embarrassing the Sifton government," moved a resolution calling on the government to take whatever steps were necessary "to acquire the control of all such natural resources as are of purely local concern" in light of the "serious financial and other obligations" entailed in opening up the northern regions of the province. Premier Sifton replied, "I have always believed … that we should administer our mines and timber. The question is not now whether we would like to control our natural resources, but what is the best way to get them." Stating that he already had discussed the matter in Cabinet and that the government intended to continue negotiating with the federal government, he asked Bramley-Moore to withdraw the resolution.[23]

Sifton was as good as his word. Less than two months later, he addressed the Canadian Club in Toronto, where he "made a vigorous plea for the equality of the three Prairie Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba with the other provinces of the Dominion." He maintained that despite what might have seemed appropriate in 1905, "the times had changed. With the growth of population and the advances generally, the time had come when these provinces were suffering from the discrimination." When he returned to Edmonton he commented that he thought his eastern audience had been sympathetic, and he believed it would be but "a short time" until the prairie provinces indeed had control of their natural resources. Little could he have imagined that it would not occur in his lifetime.

Just days after his Toronto speech, the federal government announced the reciprocity agreement with the United States, and that topic took over the national agenda in 1911. Upon their return to Canada from the coronation festivities in England, Sifton and Saskatchewan Premier Walter Scott visited Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Ottawa. After four days of meetings, they extracted from him a promise that, assuming his government were returned in the upcoming election, the natural resources, possibly excepting lands for free homesteads, would be transferred to the provinces. "The only matter to be determined is what amount of revenue now allowed the provinces in lieu of lands shall be continued," Sifton announced.[24]

Reaching this agreement prior to the federal election campaign was, according to the writer of the *Canadian Annual Review*, vital to Liberal interests in Alberta, where the farming North and ranching South, the growing towns, and the mining sector had somewhat divergent interests and attitudes regarding reciprocity. On the other hand, Albertans were united on the need to control their resources and be treated equitably within Confederation. Sifton's agreement with Laurier could be viewed as a triumph and a reason to vote Liberal in the election, even for those who had doubts about the reciprocity proposals. Certainly Sifton featured the natural resource issue in his speeches during the election campaign.

The defeat of Laurier and the election of Robert Borden and the Conservatives at first did not seem to endanger the prospects. Borden had promised that as Prime Minister he would turn over the control of "public resources" to the provinces, and Sifton wrote to him in November, as did Premier Scott, to remind him of his promise and to request an interview with him on the subject. Little action resulted, however, and persistent rumours, downplayed by Sifton, soon surfaced that the new Conservative federal government was very reluctant to reward the Liberal provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan with control of natural resources. While in Ottawa for an interprovincial conference held in 1913, Sifton, Scott, and Conservative Premier Roblin of Manitoba jointly took the opportunity to approach Borden on the issue; the Prime Minister asked that they present a case in writing. This they did in December 1913, but no action resulted. In the following year, Borden, the MP for Halifax, pointed out that the western Premiers had not taken up the subject with their fellow Premiers during the interprovincial conference, and that now the Maritime provinces were making claims with respect to the western resources, "which must be considered."[illegible] The war soon pushed the issue near the bottom of the federal government's agenda. Despite desultory continuing negotiations through the war, the issue would not be resolved until 1930.

Behind virtually all the issues so far discussed—railways, highways, telephones, control of natural resources—lay the demands of an essentially rural, agrarian society. The farmers were beginning to organize effectively to make their demands bear upon government. The creation of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) in 1909 not only would have an impact upon the Sifton Liberals, but upon Alberta politics for decades to come.[illegible] The growth of the farmers' influence may be seen in discussion about the establishment of an agricultural college. Before Sifton became Premier in 1910, a decision apparently was made and agreed to by the Liberals that the college would be located at the university in Strathcona, with farmers represented on the college board, and agricultural schools located at various points in the province. When he presented his first budget in December, Sifton acknowledged that there was some demand for "an agricultural college." However, he instead set aside $125,000 to purchase at least five, and possibly as many as eight, demonstration farm sites. They would be set up across the province in order to reflect the diversity of conditions faced by Alberta farmers. "It is not necessary in the present state of affairs in this country," asserted the Premier, "to have an agricultural college in the way of training people as they are trained in some agricultural colleges so that they may go forth and become professors in other agricultural colleges." Instead, as the *Edmonton Bulletin* explained, the demonstration farms would establish "the more common knowledge of farming absolutely necessary to enable a man with limited means and limited experience to go upon a farm and make a living for himself and family." The sites of seven demonstration farms were announced the following May, one of course being in Vermilion. In late 1912, the farmers insisting upon more, the minister of Agriculture announced that there would be three agricultural colleges: one each at Olds, Vermilion, and Claresholm.[illegible]

The reality was that the farmers increasingly were able to press their agenda upon the Sifton government. One triumph was the "single tax," intended to tax only land value and replace other forms of taxation. The UFA also successfully opposed a Sifton government plan to privatize hail insurance and forced a municipal hail insurance scheme. In 1913, in a so-called "farmers' session" just before a planned election, the UFA, now with a membership of 14,000, persuaded the government to adopt direct democracy (initiative and referendum) legislation. While Sifton would not agree to a publicly owned and operated grain elevator system like that in Manitoba, the government consented to assist in financing through bond guarantees a cooperative system (the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company) similar to that in Saskatchewan. The government met a widespread demand for improvements in rural education, including consolidated schools.[illegible] With these and other measures, the Sifton government in effect responded wholly or in part to practically every resolution from the 1913 UFA convention related to provincial powers. No other body outside the Legislature wielded such influence.

In many respects this legislative session could be seen as a victory for those in the farmers' movement who rejected direct involvement in politics. Robert Patterson, an Independent Conservative candidate in the Macleod by-election in 1910, was really the candidate of the organized farmers. His victory might have been a harbinger of political difficulty for Sifton, but in 1912 the UFA decisively defeated a motion calling for the farmers' organization to endorse independent candidates. As a result, the UFA would continue to pressure the existing parties to support farmers' demands,[illegible] a policy that the Sifton government tried to accommodate.

If the government's performance in by-elections is any indication of its popularity, then its record after Sifton took office was somewhat mixed. It did win two ministerial by-elections in the summer of 1910 and split two other by-elections in October, that in Macleod (noted above) and another in Gleichen. In the latter riding, the sitting member, E.H. Riley, was one of the Liberal dissidents who had opposed Rutherford and then Sifton; he resigned his seat to run again as an independent to seek his constituents' approval of his stand. This action was a direct challenge to Sifton as the new Premier, and not surprisingly he spent a great deal of time supporting the Liberal candidate, A.J. McArthur, who won.

A year later the story was quite different. Although the federal Liberals had taken six of seven ridings in Alberta in 1911, there was almost no carry-over effect in four provincial by-elections that followed the federal contest. All four ridings returned Conservatives, an enormous boost for the tiny opposition in the Legislature, increasing their numbers to six, plus Patterson.[illegible] The results were embarrassing for the Premier, who had invested considerable time and energy in conducting the by-election campaigns for the Liberals.

Sifton realized that he had to seize the initiative once more. When in December 1911, as noted previously, he announced his grandiose railway policy, he also revealed that he would double the Cabinet from four to eight members, though the full new Cabinet was not sworn in until May 4, 1912. The most remarkable appointment was that of Charles W. Cross as attorney general; Cross had never been a Sifton loyalist, but was an able lawyer and represented Edmonton. Evidently Sifton hoped with this appointment to make peace with at least some of the dissident Liberal faction. The other dissidents were represented in the Cabinet by John Robert Boyle, minister of Education. With the rift in the party now partially healed, Liberals were victorious in each of five by-elections held in May across the province, ranging from Edmonton to Cardston.[illegible]

Sifton's Second Term

Thus, when Sifton called a general election for April 17, 1913, he could justifiably believe that he had seized and maintained the initiative in provincial politics. He had an expanded Cabinet that was representative of all regions and Liberal factions. He had announced an aggressive, expansionist railway policy. The province was developing highways, telephone lines, and educational facilities at unprecedented speeds, even if demand continued to outstrip capability. Finally, he had demonstrated to the farmers that a Liberal government could respond to agrarian demands. He hoped that these accomplishments would be enough to offset the adverse court decision on the A & GW Railway matter and an international economy already in recession. If he was not a charismatic leader, happily for him neither was opposition leader Edward Michener. He had brought a period of stability, firm control, and direction to a fractured party and government.

The contest may have been brief, but it has been "billed as the crookedest election in Alberta history." Shortly before the election, the government had forced through the House a redistribution bill, which not only increased the number of seats from 41 to 56, but managed to arrange electoral boundaries in such a manner as to increase the likelihood of Liberal victories. It was a flagrant gerrymander.

For the voting public there was relatively little to choose between the parties. Both promised aggressive railway development, though the Conservatives favoured a significant element of government ownership. Both claimed to support direct democracy and a referendum on prohibition of alcoholic beverages, the latter popular with the organized farmers and many urban reformers. The Conservatives did call for civil service reform to minimize patronage and corruption, then a common cry of opposition parties in Canada. Sifton essentially ran on the government's record, promising more of the same in future.

Perhaps, then, it was not surprising that the battle was fought bitterly on the ground between the two party organizations. Writs went missing, some ballot boxes disappeared, the Tories were said to have imported a flood of experienced workers to influence rural voters, and the government responded by swearing in 250 special constables to arrest anyone thought to be guilty of bribing or intimidating voters. Just before the election a number of these outside workers were arrested, a tactic borrowed from the Tory Roblin government in a recent Manitoba general election. The Liberals ultimately won 38 seats to 18 for the Tories, with some of the constituencies being very closely contested. Curiously, Premier Sifton ran in two constituencies: in Macleod he was defeated by the sitting Conservative, but in Vermilion he was re-elected.

In some respects Sifton was fortunate that he had done so well amidst the serious economic downturn. Agricultural production had levelled off in 1912, and prices fell sharply and remained low in 1913 and 1914. Drought, especially in southern and eastern Alberta, made things worse. By the latter half of 1912, cities were finding it difficult to borrow, a problem that rapidly extended to provincial governments and to railways. Unemployment soared. Both labour and agrarian agitation gained a sharper edge. World War I, which began in August 1914, eventually led to higher agricultural prices, expanded production, and reduced unemployment, but it could not solve the quandary of excessive railway development on the part of both the federal government and the four western provinces. This overexpansion produced a financial crisis of major proportions, coinciding almost exactly with the beginning of the war. Ultimately, the decision of the Borden government to nationalize the Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk railway systems, starting in 1917, after several years of federal bailouts, was intended to salvage provincial finances as well as the railways themselves.

Neither politicians nor the public in 1913 had the benefit of hindsight. They seemed to assume that the recession was but a road bump on the highway to continuing prosperity. The answer was faith that a continuing expansionist policy would eventually pay off. At the legislative session of September 1913, Sifton announced that the A & GW line now would be constructed by J.D. McArthur, who already was building the ED & BC line to Peace River. The government supported other lines as well: according to L.G. Thomas, "by the end of 1913 the Legislature had authorized the guarantee of 3,336.87 miles and executed the guarantees on 2,282.8 miles [of railways]. This involved, on principal alone, the sum of $37,075,000." Sifton was a proud passenger on the first train to reach Peace River from Edmonton in December 1915; the line was fully operational the following March. But in 1916 McArthur could no longer raise money in the international markets, the A & GW line became bogged down north of Lac la Biche, and necessary upgrading and maintenance on the hurriedly built ED & BC line became impossible, leaving it sometimes impassable. This was a portent of rapidly mounting difficulties. The expansionists' chickens were coming home to roost.

The war also brought some measure of triumph in Alberta, as elsewhere in Canada, to the forces of moral reform on two fronts in particular: prohibition and women's suffrage. Sifton was an abstainer from alcoholic beverages and had campaigned for prohibition in his youth, but as Premier he had learned that moral reform causes were politically dangerous, for they often provoked bitter, divisive battles. In Canada most successful politicians of Sifton's era were, at best, reluctant reformers capitulating to popular pressure. They tended to be social conservatives, not radicals.

The temperance forces produced a petition in October 1914 asking for a prohibitory liquor act. It was signed by over 23,600 people, more than enough to trigger a referendum under the Direct Legislation Act. A week later Sifton moved, without discussion, that the issue be put to the people. The referendum was duly held on July 21, 1915, and prohibition was approved by roughly 58,000 to 37,000; women had requested the right to vote in the referendum, but Sifton had refused them. In 1916 the Sifton government passed legislation to prohibit "the sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes," though it did not prevent either the production of liquor within the province or its export. It is true, as popular historian James Gray has pointed out, that convictions for drunkenness in Alberta plummeted dramatically, from 5,710 in 1914 to 391 in 1917. But 1917 was the low year and convictions gradually increased. It proved nearly impossible to enforce the new law, which brought grief both to politicians and to police forces. Indeed, the problems of enforcing the law were a major factor in the decision in 1916 to abandon the contract with Ottawa for policing by the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and to create the Alberta Provincial Police in March 1917. The change was unpopular in the province, but the silver lining for the Sifton Liberals was the establishment of a force wholly responsible to the government and its policies.

Although only men had voted in the prohibition referendum, the question of temperance was very much an issue for reform-minded women. Such women were determined to have a voice in the political arena. Having followed the violent struggle of women for the vote in Great Britain, by 1913 suffragists in Alberta were more resolute and better organized than in the past. Moreover, at its 1912 annual meeting in Edmonton the UFA had strongly endorsed votes for women.

In 1913 a large delegation organized by the Edmonton Equal Franchise League received a chilly reception from the Premier. Tom Wilson, MLA for Rocky Mountain House, later recalled:

> Sifton wouldn't let them go up the front steps to the Legislature. He stood on the second step and kept them standing around the well in the approach and he said to them, "did you ladies wash up your luncheon dishes before you came down here to ask me for the vote?" He said, "if you haven't you'd better go home because you're not going to get any votes from me."

This account was substantially confirmed by Robert E. Campbell, MLA for Banff, who noted that Sifton "couldn't have been more impolitic. [The women] went away gnashing their teeth."

The suffragists were not deterred. On October 9, 1914, another delegation met with Sifton, presenting him with a petition signed or supported by 40,000 persons. Sifton noted the absence of farmers from the petition and remarked,

> My own personal opinion is that there are only two logical reasons against equal franchise—all the others have been played out altogether—that of doubling the expense, and uncertainty as to the desire for the franchise by the women themselves.

Eventually, he conceded, women would have the vote.

However, Sifton was a very reluctant convert to the suffragist cause, as events in February 1915 demonstrated. A women's delegation quietly infiltrated the Legislature, and when Sifton was called he found them occupying the politicians' seats. They clearly were not going to leave until they had been heard. The Premier was furious, his mood not improving as he listened to their speeches. He replied with sarcasm and bitter wit. He had, he said, "learned not to argue with a lady." He expected that "this question is liable to be dealt with" at the next session of the Legislature, but "I never make promises." Incredibly, he proposed that

> it will be for the ladies ... to give the members of the Legislature assurance that if they enlarge the franchise, those members will individually get more votes—which is after all one of the strongest ways in which you can appeal to male human nature, as represented in the Legislature.

He thought that the women had not been advocating their cause for very long and added: "Even men do not get justice without a great deal of work." In March he met with two of the leaders of the movement, Emily Murphy and Nellie McClung; his only public remark following the meeting was, "Mrs. McClung and Mrs. Murphy are very determined women."

Finally Sifton succumbed to the inevitable. In the Legislature he committed the government to bring in an equal suffrage measure at the next session. He confirmed this pledge in a letter to the president of the UFA, writing that "I have given instructions for the preparation of a statute placing men and women in Alberta on the basis of absolute equality so far as Provincial matters are concerned." The new law, passed in 1916, made Alberta the third province, after Saskatchewan and Manitoba, to grant women the vote.

The Sifton government also legislated in another area of importance to women and the

UFA: that of dower rights. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women had very few rights with respect to the disposal of properties by their spouses. In the spring of 1915, the Alberta government passed the Married Women's Home Protection Act, which provided some limited protection. It also led to renewed pressure for enhanced rights, and during the spring 1917 session the government passed the Dower Act, which granted "a married woman a life estate in the homestead arising on the death of her husband." It also "provided that any disposition of the homestead made by a married man without his wife's written consent would be 'null and void.'" Some women were happy, but the reaction was at best mixed. Historian Catherine Cavanaugh comments:

> Rural women … felt [that the legislation] only went part way in recognizing the wife's interest in land she had helped to develop. However, when they raised the question of equal property rights with the government, the Premier took the position that the existing legislation … was "in advance of any of the Western Provinces" and he, therefore, contemplated "no change in the existing laws."[42]

A reluctant reformer Sifton may have been. Yet he was sufficiently a political realist to bow to pressures and make necessary concessions. When he decided to call a provincial election for June 1917, he could claim something of a record as a reformer; in fact, Nellie McClung and many other women supported the Liberals, believing "that women should support the party that had given them the vote." Moreover, the government still enjoyed some considerable support from the farmers. Duncan Marshall, minister of Agriculture, addressing the UFA convention in Calgary in January 1916, claimed that "the Alberta Government had put more legislation, originated by the organized farmers, on the statute books than any other Province in Canada."[43] In addition to this legislative record, the government had a strong political machine and exercised patronage freely and effectively. Conversely, the Conservatives remained fairly ineffective. The outcome was 34 Liberals elected (with Sifton victorious in Vermilion), 19 Conservatives, and 3 independents. Ominously for the two traditional parties, two of the independent members were elected as candidates of the Non-Partisan League, a recently established agrarian political party.[44]

The Move to Ottawa

Victorious though he was, Sifton was tiring in his job. In May, even as the election campaign was underway, he told a reporter for the *Calgary Herald*, "I shall be a happy man to step down and allow someone else to take the reins of office. I have had seven years now."[45] He cannot have known in May the turn that national politics would take in the ensuing months.

The demand for conscription of manpower for overseas service had become insistent in English Canada as the war dragged on and the slaughter of armies continued unabated. "Alberta," the Premier had declared when war broke out in 1914, was prepared "to sacrifice its last dollar and its last man" to the war effort.[46] He does not appear to have entertained much doubt that conscription was necessary in the circumstances of 1917.

Unable to reach an agreement with Sir Wilfrid Laurier to support a policy of conscription, the Borden government decided in the summer of 1917 to work toward a "win-the-war" coalition or Unionist government. It would consist of roughly equal numbers of Conservatives and pro-conscription Liberals (of whom there were many) who were prepared to bury partisan hatchets to present a united front on the issue of conscription. Intense negotiations began in July and continued over the summer; by August Arthur Sifton had agreed to enter a coalition government, and the new federal Cabinet was announced on October 12. Sifton resigned as Premier, being succeeded by Charles Stewart; he entered the Union government under Sir Robert Borden as minister of Customs and was duly elected on December 17 for Medicine Hat in a near Unionist sweep of Alberta.

Though he only turned 59 shortly after going to Ottawa, Sifton's health was declining. It is said that he never walked any distance, but required a car to transport him even the few hundred meters from his apartment in the Château Laurier Hotel to the House of Commons. This incapacity reinforced his already reclusive nature, and he may have been the least visible to the public of all of Borden's ministers. He was given what were thought to be less demanding portfolios: minister of Customs and Inland Revenue (May 1918 to September 1919); minister of Public Works (September to December 1919); and Secretary of State (from December 1919). Other duties included service on the war committee of the Cabinet and, in 1919–20, on the Air Board, of which he was first chair. The Air Board was designed to establish standards and structures for regulating air traffic in Canada. He acquitted himself well in his administrative duties, but had neither the energy nor the time in office to make a significant impact. His fellow Cabinet ministers nevertheless found him highly effective in policy discussions. Borden later recalled, probably quite sincerely:

> Among his colleagues, his rare intellectual power was universally acknowledged; in questions of difficulty, there was no one in whose judgment I placed firmer reliance, while I was head of the Government.[47]

Sifton was one of the Canadian delegates–together with Borden, C.J. Doherty, and Sir George Foster—at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Here he contributed behind the scene, as vice-chair of the Commission on Ports, Waterways, and Railways. He represented Canadian interests on the Commission on Aerial Navigation. He assisted in the preparation of the Labour Convention, which established the International Labour Organization. The main issue for him was ensuring recognition of Canada's equality of status among the nations. Canada had contributed so much in men and material to the war effort, and it shocked Canadian delegates that the country was so little regarded by the great powers. Sifton found that constant vigilance was necessary because his country's closest allies, Britain and the United States, tended to include Canada in a generic "British Empire" category; they assumed that the interests of the Empire were indivisible. Asked to contribute his thoughts for a volume commemorating the Peace Conference, Sifton wrote that Canada asked nothing in return for "her sacrifices save that in matters in which she is vitally interested she should be treated as an equal." Not until the Balfour Declaration issued by the Imperial Conference of 1926 was that position fully acknowledged. In the absence of Borden, Sifton and Doherty signed for Canada the final form of the peace treaty on June 28, 1919, at Versailles.[48]

Early in 1921 Sifton felt unwell and took leave from his duties for a few days, stating that he required rest and quiet. His health rapidly worsened, then briefly seemed to promise hope of recovery. Once again his condition suddenly deteriorated, and he died at home in Ottawa on January 21, 1921.[49]

Conclusion

When Sifton passed away, the Liberal government in Alberta was within months of being crushed by a UFA movement that had made the decision to enter directly into politics. L.G. Thomas has called the period from 1911 to 1921 the "Decline Period" for Alberta Liberals. Although Thomas terms Sifton's departure for federal politics "a tragedy for the provincial party," and "a more severe blow to the Liberals … than any the Conservatives could level,"[50] he clearly believes that many of the problems faced by the Liberals long predated the loss of Sifton; they were not simply the result of the radical politicizing of the farmers' movement.

Thus Sifton must bear some of the responsibility. That he had held the party together at all after the rupture of 1910 was a remarkable feat, but in Thomas's view it had been achieved by a ruthless, often dictatorial and manipulative approach by the Premier. R.B. Bennett memorably had remarked, "Well, we'll have to bow to the Czar," after a refusal by Sifton to be flexible on a procedural matter in the Legislature,[51] and the appellation seemed to stick. Some Albertans enjoyed jabbing at the Premier's aloof bearing and reticence: "Li'l Arthur" and "the Sphinx" were the most common belittling references. It was not in Sifton's nature to rebuild the party through warmth and conciliation. The public could respect Sifton, and see him as the best of available alternatives, but it could not love him or feel that he was "one of them."

This manner meant that even the policies that did represent change or compromise did not win many loyal friends. The impression always seemed to be that the government was making concessions, often grudgingly, as a result of pressure rather than embracing change because it believed in it. Many Albertans, especially farmers, were disenchanted with both traditional political parties and chose the Liberals as the lesser of two evils. Sifton never seemed to appreciate that he needed to reach out and embrace the agrarian and wider Albertan community if he wished to build long-term supporters loyal to the Liberal Party. Historian Bob Irwin notes that the Liberal government in Saskatchewan co-opted the provincial farmers' movement by bringing some of its leaders into the Cabinet, something that Sifton apparently never attempted in Alberta.[52] Based on his life's experience, he likely had no conception that a third party could have a significant impact in Canadian politics. For him the voters always would have only two real choices, between the forward-looking Liberals and the backward-looking Conservatives. L.G. Thomas contends that many of the Liberal policies—and the way that they were handled–simply reinforced Albertans' mistrust of the traditional parties,[53] to say nothing of constant charges of corruption that plagued public discourse in Alberta as elsewhere.

Yet to some extent this is too negative. Sifton did preside over the expansion of Alberta and the unification of its regions by means of transportation, communication, and a more integrated economy. Whatever his reasons for doing so, he and his colleagues empowered the UFA and realized many of the farmers' objectives. Under his leadership Alberta arguably was in the vanguard of social reform for its day. In practice Sifton's government learned to go well beyond his stated basic duty of government to develop "agricultural and mining resources … and transportation facilities." Sir Robert Borden perhaps was not so wrong in lamenting, upon Sifton's passing, the loss of "a public servant of the highest ability and of the most conspicuous patriotism."[54]

Notes

1. *Toronto Daily Star*, October 15, 1910. The author wishes to thank his colleagues, Rod Macleod, Paul Voisey, and Bob Irwin, who read a draft of the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions and corrections; and Brad Rennie for expert, patient, and thorough editing.
2. D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton*, I, *The Young Napoleon, 1861–1900* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1982), chapter 1; National Archives of Canada (NA), Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, vol. 288, *Sifton Family Record*.
3. Hall, *Sifton*, I, chapter 2; Hall, "Arthur Lewis Watkins Sifton," forthcoming in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, volume 15; Canada, Parliament, *Sessional Papers*, 1886, #8, pt. IV, 7; 1887, #7, pt. IV, 9; Louis Knafla and R. Klumpenhouwer, *Lords of the Western Bench: A Biographical History of the Supreme and District Courts of Alberta, 1876–1990* (Calgary: The Legal Archives Society of Alberta, 1997), 166; Aritha van Herk, *Mavericks: An Incorrigible History of Alberta* (Toronto: Viking/Penguin, 2001), 312–13.
4. Hall, *Sifton*, I, chapters 2–5; NA, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, correspondence between Arthur and Clifford Sifton, 1896–1900.
5. NA, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, correspondence between A.L. Sifton and Clifford Sifton, 1898–99; *Calgary Weekly Herald*, November 1898–June 1899.
6. See *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, June 11, 1910, for one of many accounts.
7. Saskatchewan Archives Board, *Directory of the Council & Legislative Assembly of the North-West Territories, 1876–1905* (Saskatoon, 1970).
8. *Toronto Daily Star*, October 15, 1910; *Canadian Annual Review* (CAR), 1901, 206–7; 1903, 195; NA, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, 119933–34, A.L. Sifton to Clifford Sifton, July 2, 1903; Knafla and Klumpenhouwer, *Lords of the Western Bench*, 166. See also NA, Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, vol. 311, file "Reciprocity and the Roman Catholic Church 1911," clipping from the *Ottawa Evening Journal*, n.d., which refers to "the arrangement in which Judge McGuire [*sic*] undertook, if appointed [in 1901] to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the North West, to retire at the end of two years on a pension, and thus make way for the appointment of Arthur Sifton as Chief Justice."
9. *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, July 2, 1910; Knafla and Klumpenhouwer, *Lords of the Western Bench*, 167; *Manitoba Free Press*, January 22, 1921.
10. NA, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, Bulyea to Laurier, February 25, March 14, 1910; *Toronto Daily Star*, October 15, 1910. On the A & GW Railway scandal, see L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A*

History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905–1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), chapter 4, 58–94; and Jay Heard, "The Alberta and Great Waterways Railway Dispute, 1909–1913" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1990).

11. NA, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, 171898–99, Cross to Laurier, June 7, 1910.
12. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 110; *Edmonton Daily Bulletin*, September 1, 1910.
13. *Evening Journal* (Edmonton), June 9, 20, 1910; *Daily Bulletin*, June 9, 28, 30, 1910; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 94.
14. *Toronto Daily Star*, October 15, 1910.
15. *Daily Bulletin*, August 4, 1911. In 1910 Edward Michener, elected as an Independent Conservative for Red Deer, had been named leader of the opposition, but had been distinctly overshadowed by Bennett. See *Bulletin*, November 10, 1910.
16. *Daily Bulletin*, May 20, 1912; April 5, 1911.
17. *Daily Bulletin*, November 6, 1910; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 106–7, 110–12, 127–29; D.R. Babcock, *Alexander Cameron Rutherford: A Gentleman of Strathcona* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1989), 62; Heard, "Alberta and Great Waterways Railway Dispute," 152.
18. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 122–25; *Daily Bulletin*, December 6, 7, 1911; February 7, 1912.
19. *Daily Bulletin*, February 7, 1912; Bob Irwin, "Whose Railway Was It?" in Bob Hesketh and Frances Swyripa (eds.), *Edmonton: The Life of a City* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1995), 117.
20. Tony Cashman, *A History of Motoring in Alberta* (Edmonton: Spartan Press, 1976), 13, 16, 19; Ted Byfield (ed.), *Alberta in the 20th Century: A Journalistic History of the Province in Twelve Volumes, 3, The Boom and the Bust, 1910–1914* (Edmonton: United Western Communication, 1994), 34–52; *Daily Bulletin*, January 26, 1912.
21. Tony Cashman, *Singing Wires: The Telephone in Alberta* (Edmonton: Alberta Government Telephones, 1972), 210; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 173.
22. *Daily Bulletin*, December 13, 1910; January 15, 26, November 27, 1912; January 14, 1913.
23. *Daily Bulletin*, November 22, 26, 1910; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 114–15; D.J. Hall, *Clifford Sifton, II, A Lonely Eminence, 1901–1929* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1985), 172.
24. *Daily Bulletin*, January 24, 31, February 3, August 3, 11, 1911.
25. *CAR*, 1910, 245; 1913, 706; 1914, 709–11; *Bulletin*, November 15, 1911, May 21, June 18, 1912. The Maritime case included the following premises: that the lands and resources had been held for the benefit of the Dominion since 1870; that citizens of all provinces had shared the costly burdens entailed in opening up the West; that the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan had been given disproportionately large compensation in lieu of lands in 1905; that vast tracts of Dominion lands and resources had been turned over to Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba to extend their boundaries in 1912 with no compensation to the rest of the country for loss of this common resource; and that Manitoba had received extremely generous compensation in 1912 to place it on a basis of equality with the other prairie provinces, again with no compensation to other provinces. These arguments were made in the context of Maritime vexation over declining influence within Confederation. See Ernest Forbes, *Maritime Rights: The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919–1927, A Study in Canadian Regionalism* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979), 13–22.
26. See Bradford James Rennie, *The Rise of Agrarian Democracy: The United Farmers and Farm Women of Alberta, 1909–1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
27. Rennie, *Agrarian Democracy*, 38; *Daily Bulletin*, December 13, 19, 1910; May 10, 1911; December 18, 1912.

28. *Daily Bulletin*, January 31, 1912; January 22, 1913; Rennie, *Agrarian Democracy*, 42–46, 142. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 134–36, provides details on all the relevant legislation.
29. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 94; Rennie, *Agrarian Democracy*, 53; *Daily Bulletin*, October 11, 1910; January 18, 1912.
30. *Daily Bulletin*, September 17–October 4, 1910; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 117. See also *Daily Bulletin*, September 26, October 24, November 1, 1911.
31. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 125–26; *Daily Bulletin*, December 14, 21, 1911; May 6, 1912.
32. *Alberta in the 20th Century*, 3, *The Boom and the Bust, 1910–1914*, 237–39; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 136–46.
33. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 117, 144.
34. Ibid., 151; John A. Eagle, "J.D. McArthur and the Peace River Railway," *Alberta History* (Autumn 1981): 37–38; Irwin, "Whose Railway Was It?" 119–20.
35. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 158; *CAR*, 1914, 670; 1915, 694–95; James H. Gray, *Bacchanalia Revisited: Western Canada's Boozy Skid to Social Disaster* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982), 25.
36. Gray, *Bacchanalia Revisited*, 26; Robert E. Popham and Wolfgang Schmidt (compilers), *Statistics of Alcohol Use and Alcoholism in Canada, 1871–1956* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), 51; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 157–63; *CAR*, 1916, 741–42; Sean Innes Moir, "The Alberta Provincial Police, 1919–1932" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1992), 1–74.
37. Nancy M. Sheehan, "Temperance, the WCTU, and Education in Alberta, 1905–1930" (PhD dissertation, University of Alberta, 1980); Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 163–66; Faye Reinebert Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," *Alberta History* 39, no. 4 (Autumn 1991): 25–31; Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 47, 66–75; Paul Voisey, "The 'Votes for Women' Movement," *Alberta History* 23, no. 3 (Summer 1975): 10–23; *Daily Bulletin*, January 18, 1912.
38. Wilson cited in Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," 26; Robert E. Campbell, *I Would Do It Again: Reminiscences of the Rockies* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1959), 180–81.
39. Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," 26; *CAR*, 1914, 652.
40. The following paragraph is derived largely from Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," 27–29; but see also Robert E. Campbell, *I Would Do It All Again*, 181; and *CAR*, 1915, 708, 710.
41. *CAR*, 1915, 710; Holt, "Women's Suffrage in Alberta," 29.
42. Catherine Anne Cavanaugh, "The Women's Movement in Alberta as Seen Through the Campaign for Dower Rights, 1909–1928" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1986), 46, 50; Margaret E. McCallum, "Prairie Women and the Struggle for a Dower Law, 1905–1920," *Prairie Forum* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 19–34; Rennie, *Agrarian Democracy*, 114–15.
43. *CAR*, 1916, 745; Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 171. Professor Thomas comments (206) that "the U. F. A. Convention had more to say in the determination of the policy of the Liberal government [from 1913] than the provincial Legislature."
44. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 171–79.
45. Cited in ibid., 179.
46. *CAR*, 1914, 659.
47. *Montreal Daily Star*, January 21, 1921; *Canadian Who Was Who* (1934), 471; NA, A.L. Sifton Papers, vol. 2, file "June 1919," memorandum from R.L. Borden, June 17, 1919 (re Air Board); NA, Sir Robert Borden Papers, 158494, public statement by Borden upon learning of the death of A.L. Sifton.

48. NA, Sir Robert Borden Papers, 63973, Sifton to Borden, June 27, 1919; 63974, message, Lord Milner to Governor General, June 28, 1919.
49. *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, January 21, 1921; *Toronto Daily Star*, January 21, 1921; *Montreal Daily Star*, January 21, 1921; *Manitoba Free Press*, January 24, 25, 1921.
50. Lewis G. Thomas, "The Liberal Party in Alberta, 1905–1921," in Carlo Caldarola (ed.), *Society and Politics in Alberta: Research Papers* (Toronto: Methuen, 1979), 10–12.
51. *Daily Bulletin*, November 26, 1910.
52. Personal communication to author.
53. Thomas, *Liberal Party*, 157.
54. NA, Sir Robert Borden Papers, 158494, public statement by Borden upon learning of the death of A.L. Sifton.

Charles Stewart 1917-1921

CARROL JAQUES

Charles Stewart, 1917–1921

Introduction

When Charles Stewart became Premier of Alberta, the First World War had been raging for over three years, and a Union government was in place in Ottawa to cope with the conscription crisis. Alberta Premier Arthur Sifton was invited to join this Union government, leaving a vacancy that was filled by Charles Stewart on October 30, 1917.

Charles Stewart was born into a farming family in Strabane, Wentworth County, Ontario, on August 26, 1868, the son of Charles Stewart Sr. and Catherine (Finlay) Stewart. His father was a stonemason, a trade that did not offer steady work in rural Ontario, so he supported his family on a 100-acre farm. Charles's first brush with politics occurred when he visited the neighbouring town of Carlisle with his father to hear Sir John A. Macdonald. According to family lore, Sir John noticed Charles, telling him that he seemed to be a fine boy and would be a good politician some day.[1] When Charles Jr. was 16, the family moved to a farm near Barrie, Ontario, where, on December 17, 1891, at the age of 23, he married Jane Russell Sneath. His father died the next year, and, as the eldest son, Charles was left in charge of the family and the family farm.

Twelve years later, when a disastrous storm wrecked his barn, wiped out his crop, and partially destroyed the house, Charles decided to try his hand on a homestead in the west. He had worked as a harvester on the prairies in the autumn of 1898 and had dreamed of moving to the newly opened lands of what was then the North-West Territories. In 1905 the 37-year-old came west with his settler's effects, travelling on the rail line through Wetaskiwin down a long hill into the valley at Gwyn. According to stories Stewart told his family, the engineer, who was drunk, threw the throttle wide open and let the train speed down the rails—rails that had been placed on ties with little preparation of the roadbed in the rush to lay the track. In spite of this adventure, Charles arrived safely and built a small shack near Killam where the family soon joined him. Conditions were harsh during a very cold winter; ice formed behind the kitchen cupboard, and the warmest place for the baby's crib was on the kitchen table. As had happened in Ontario, Stewart's crops were destroyed, this time by hail.

Charles had gained some experience as a stonemason and bricklayer by working with his father in Ontario, so he supplemented his farm income by pursuing his trade. He worked for the Canadian Pacific Railway, laying foundations for stations, section houses, and water tanks from Strome to Hardisty, and digging the first town well in Killam in 1906. He worked as a stonemason on the High Level Bridge in the boomtown of Edmonton until work stopped because of a strike. He returned to the Killam district and went into business as a farm implement dealer with the Massey-Harris Company and into real estate with Killam resident, Ernie McGowan.[2] During this time Stewart took out a new homestead in the area[3] and in 1912 bought the land north of Killam that stayed in the Stewart family for generations.

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF CHARLES STEWART

The Stewart farmhouse. Charles Stewart is standing on the lower verandah, at the left.

Early Political Involvement

In addition to his involvement in the fledgling Killam business community, Charles Stewart took an interest in local politics, becoming the first chair of the Killam school district. Under his watch, the school district was organized and the first teacher hired to teach classes above a store until a school could be built. Charles also attended the first meeting of Killam ratepayers on January 19, 1907, and was involved when the Village of Killam was incorporated in January 1908. With this background, he was an obvious choice to run as the Liberal candidate in the new constituency of Sedgewick, which stretched to Alberta's northern border, south to Red Deer, east to Saskatchewan, and west to a line between Daysland and Camrose.

Stewart was elected by acclamation as the member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Sedgewick in the election of 1909. He joined the government of Alexander Rutherford, which had won 36 of 41 provincial seats. Rutherford had run on the campaign platform, "Rutherford, Reliability, and Railways," all of which were soon questioned. Charles Stewart was one of the insurgents who became "dissident Liberals" because of the railway scandals that engulfed Rutherford's government. A royal commission appointed to investigate possible fraud or incompetence in the government's dealings with Alberta and Great Waterways Railway found no evidence of wrongdoing, but Rutherford's political career was over. He was replaced by Arthur Sifton, a man Stewart could support, in May 1910. In 1912 Charles Stewart was appointed to the Cabinet as the first minister of

Municipal Affairs, recognition of the increasing complexity of society as towns and villages grew. He used his experience with the municipal system in Ontario as a basis for the new legislation that established Alberta's system of local government.

When the Sifton government called an election for April 17, 1913, Charles Stewart kept his seat in a contest against the Conservative candidate, William Watson. He relinquished his position as minister of Municipal Affairs and took over as minister of Public Works in December 1913. He was instrumental in passing a bill that created the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company (a predecessor of the United Grain Growers) and the bill that authorized the "initiative" and "referendum," two aspects of direct democracy that were gathering the support of farmers' groups in the west. Stewart advocated government ownership of public utilities and was a strong supporter of a government telephone system, which he felt would ensure that all farmers had access to a telephone.

Four years later, when Premier Arthur Sifton called an election for June 7, 1917, Stewart was nominated as a candidate by Mrs. William Gibbs, in recognition of the enfranchisement of women in Alberta in 1916. He was so confident of victory that he did not distribute any campaign literature, providing instead a short synopsis of the various acts that were passed in the Legislature by his government.

In spite of Stewart's confidence, this could have been a disastrous election. The federal government had just announced that it would impose conscription for military service, a policy that would soon split the Liberal Party. Talk of a Union government in Ottawa to deal with the crisis included a rumour in the *Calgary Herald* in early January 1917 that Premier Sifton would step aside in favour of Charles Stewart to keep the leadership out of the hands of his enemy, Charles W. Cross.[1] Whether Sifton called the election to thwart Cross or because he was wary of the disruption that might ensue for Liberals in Alberta as a result of the conscription crisis, he easily won an election that the Liberals might not have won if he had waited until 1918.

By then, the Alberta Liberals were riven with dissent. Old-time Liberals such as Frank Oliver and his one-time enemy, Charles Cross, had captured the support of Liberals who remained loyal to Laurier and opposed conscription. The majority of Liberals supported conscription and the Union government that was elected later in the year.[2] Premier Arthur Sifton left Alberta politics for the position of minister of Customs in the Union government of Prime Minister Robert Borden.

The Premiership

Charles Stewart succeeded Arthur Sifton as Premier of Alberta on October 30, 1917; he also took the portfolio of minister of Railways and Telephones. His selection as Premier was not a surprise, given that he had served an apprenticeship in Cabinet since 1913, and, according to newspapers of the day, he seemed to be popular with other politicians as well as with his fellow farmers. *The Nutcracker* spoke dismissively of Sifton as well as Stewart's Cabinet colleagues, while praising Stewart as hardworking, able, energetic, and sensible.[3] Stewart's main rival for the job was Charles Cross, who, as an opponent of conscription, was on the wrong side of the issue as far as Sifton and the federal Union government were concerned.

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF CHARLES STEWART

Charles Stewart (behind the plough) at a sod-turning event in St. Albert, shortly after becoming Premier in 1917.

Charles Stewart took over the reins of a government that seemed tired and less than able to deal with the challenges of the post-war years. *The Nutcracker* commented that while Stewart's ideas were very constructive, "one swallow does not make a summer, and one boat, even if sound, will not save the whole crew."[7] Previous Liberal governments had accomplished almost everything they had promised in 1905: they had established a university and normal schools, extended railways into the north, and responded to the social challenges of the suffragist movement and the temperance lobby. But the party remained divided. Stewart's Cabinet contained both supporters of Sifton's move into the Union government and supporters of Laurier, led by Charles Cross, who despaired at the thought of deserting the Liberal Party. Although a supporter of conscription and union, Stewart kept above the fray and tried desperately to control his Cabinet and the rest of the Liberal MLAs. According to the *Edmonton Journal*, "the most ardent Laurier Liberals evidently regarded the Premier as lukewarm, and Unionists regarded him as a fence-sitter."[8]

Charles Stewart presided over a milestone in western parliamentary history when he welcomed the first women elected to a Canadian Legislature: Louise McKinney, president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, had been elected to represent the Non-Partisan League by the voters in Claresholm in the June election, and Roberta MacAdams, a nursing sister, had been elected in August 1917 by the service voters overseas.

This first session of the fourth Legislature in February 1918 got off to a rocky start when Stewart had to adjourn it so he could attend a conference of Premiers in Ottawa. On his return, and to the surprise of both sides of the House, he was attacked by one of his own backbenchers, Alexander G. MacKay, for not pushing the issue of provincial control of natural resources at the Premiers' meeting. Another Liberal, James G. Turgeon, criticized the government for raising $800,000 through taxation to support soldiers' dependents because he considered that to be a federal responsibility. There was also discomfort over the process for electing the deputy speaker, a position that had to be filled because the incumbent, Joseph E. Stauffer, a soldier member, had been killed in action in France. Party discipline was difficult to maintain, which would have been serious if the 19-member Conservative opposition had not itself been in such bad shape, leaderless and unable to find an appropriate successor to Edward Michener, who had been appointed to the Senate. Many Conservatives, caught up in the sentiment of the Union government in Ottawa, were reluctant to attack Stewart's government. In addition, soldier candidates on both sides of the Legislature were inclined to vote as a bloc on any issue affecting those in the armed services.

The Liberal government, not a cohesive unit since the railway scandals, and now even more divided along personal and policy issues, managed to pass some substantial legislation during the 1918 session. Under Stewart's watch, the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed, providing for fixed compensation to wives and children in the event of injury or death. This legislation, progressive for its time, replaced old legislation that had allowed for compensation to be set as a result of sometimes lengthy and expensive litigation.

A celebratory luncheon was organized by the Liberal Cabinet for Premier Stewart and the rest of the Liberal MLAs to wind up the 1918 session, Stewart's first as Premier. Words of praise flowed at the elegant Macdonald Hotel in appreciation for what Stewart had accomplished, and Stewart replied by declaring that his one idea on entering public life was to make good. He went on to admit that he had not been particularly keen about becoming Premier; he had enjoyed his position as minister of Public Works and could have enjoyed working in any department in government. Summing up, he reaffirmed his belief in the principles of Liberalism, freedom, and democracy.[9]

The last vestiges of the rollicking rivalry of the days of the railway scandals were played out in Charles Stewart's Cabinet when he asked for the resignation of Charles Cross as attorney general on August 22, 1918. When Cross refused, Stewart formally rescinded the Order-In-Council appointing him.[10] That was not the end of the situation, and during the 1919 Legislative session he was forced to justify his actions. He explained that even though he had asked Cross to get rid of two detectives in his department because it was work the provincial police could do, Cross had refused. In addition, Stewart pointed to the former attorney general's neglect of his department.[11]

There were rumours at the time that Stewart was considering resigning for health reasons and that Cross had the necessary support to become leader—and if not Cross, there were others who were interested. Charles Cross had been only 32 when Alexander Rutherford had appointed him attorney general in 1905, but he was already recognized as second only to Frank Oliver as the most important Liberal in Edmonton, if not the province. It was always assumed that one day he would take his turn as Premier. His association with Rutherford during the railway scandals and the acceptance of Sifton as Premier in 1910 meant that Cross's star shone less brightly, but he was still a formidable and attractive force in Alberta politics. When he swallowed more than a decade of animosity to stand with his nemesis Frank Oliver in support of the Laurier Liberals in the conscription debate, he became a potential embarrassment to the government. Charles Stewart dispelled rumours of his own resignation, fired the unfortunate Cross, and stayed on.

With Cross gone, Stewart turned to the problems besetting his new government. While he seemed popular and well liked, voters were restless and casting about for alternatives to the established parties. His greatest challenge came from the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA), which had been organized in 1909 to lobby on behalf of the agricultural sector. While it had become powerful enough to dictate to the Sifton and Stewart governments, this was still not good enough for some prominent UFA members who wanted to create their own political party. Momentum within the UFA for the formation of a party had lost some of its strength during Sifton's term when war was declared in August 1914, but the greatest blow to forming a political party came when one of its strongest supporters, UFA President W.J. Tregillus, died in November 1914. The next UFA president, James Speakman, was supportive but not as enthusiastic about the idea of forming a political party. When Speakman died in December 1915, he was succeeded by a man who was opposed to the establishment of a political organization—Henry Wise Wood. To the consternation of some UFA members, during the 1917 election Wood encouraged farmers to influence the democratic process by attending and voting at Liberal or Conservative nomination meetings.[12]

The demand for change in the political process was channelled into a new organization, the Non-Partisan League, which combined the nascent urban labour movement under the leadership of William Irvine of Calgary with those who believed that farmers should have their own political party. It was under this banner that Louise McKinney had been elected in Claresholm in the 1917 election, which also returned fellow Non-Partisan League campaigner, James Weir of Nanton.

Voter restlessness brought on by the economic shock of a long war and then the Armistice in 1918 was compounded by labour strife, the influenza epidemic, and the fallout from prohibition. The Prohibition Act had been passed in 1916, not because of any Liberal government initiative, but because of the resounding victory in a referendum on July 21, 1915, for the Alberta Temperance and Moral Reform League and the UFA, both of which had lobbied for a prohibition law. By the time Stewart was Premier, it was apparent that while most people had found a way to subvert the legislation and purchase liquor, no one was in favour of abandoning prohibition. In a statement to the Legislature in April 1921, Stewart pointed out that the difficult task of prohibiting the sale of alcohol in barrooms was an important step in social reform, while acknowledging that allowing the sale of liquor for medicinal purposes was a violation of the spirit, if not the letter of the law.[13] Liquor still flowed in the province: in the previous year government vendors had made a profit for the province of $811,389, while the 250 druggists had profited to the tune of $696,075; and 504 doctors had issued 531,168 prescriptions for liquor at approximately $2 each for a profit of $1,062,336. Bootleggers' gains were estimated to be over $7 million.[14] Unable to remove the legislation from the books, Stewart and his government were criticized because they could not enforce the legislation, nor could they throw off accusations that they—or their friends—were profiting from it. In any case, it made the government look weak.[15]

Prohibition was only one of many pieces of legislation passed by the Liberal government at the behest of the UFA. Charles Stewart was a farmer—in fact, he was an active member and supporter of the UFA—and made no excuses for his sensitivity to the wishes of the agricultural community. Every year the UFA executive met with the government to inform it of the resolutions that had been passed at the UFA's annual convention. After one such meeting on February 4, 1920, Premier Stewart responded with a $4 million appropriation that he promised to take to the Legislature to extend the telephone system. Prompted by the UFA, Stewart was instrumental in passing legislation ensuring some guarantees for northern railways, as well as legislation that guaranteed the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation Company the interest on irrigation bonds for two years.[10]

The UFA was responsible for the death of some legislation as well. A bill that would have allowed Imperial Oil to construct pipelines in the province was introduced by the MLA from Peace River, William Rae, as a private member's bill on behalf of the oil company. The bill caused a great deal of dissension because many MLAs thought a pipeline should be built as a common carrier like the railroads, while other MLAs argued that such an arrangement was impossible. Those in favour of the bill asserted that while the railroads could transport a variety of products, including oil, a pipeline was built to carry a company's private production. When Premier Stewart stood to read a telegram from Henry Wise Wood and Herbert Greenfield of the UFA that emphatically opposed the legislation giving Imperial Oil the power to build pipelines, he effectively cast a pall on the bill and it was withdrawn,[11] while a similar bill that would have allowed Edmonton Gas and Power to build pipelines was defeated the next day.[12]

UFA supporters believed that proportional representation would solve many of the problems in government, and in a debate during the 1919 Cochrane by-election Stewart promised to bring it in before the next provincial election. He took the time to explain that proportional representation would increase representation from the towns and cities at the expense of farmers.[13] When reminded of his promise during debate in the Legislature, he replied that the government was considering all the information and that no legislation was being proposed during the 1920 session.[14] On March 4, 1920, he announced in the House that the system of proportional representation appealed to him very much and that he had appointed an official to collect data. If the House adopted proportional representation, the next election would be held under that system.[15] A committee established to fulfill Stewart's promise eventually disintegrated amid battles within the group and a general dislike of the concept.

By the summer of 1919, the UFA had thrown off the objections of Henry Wise Wood and had established a political organization, absorbing the Non-Partisan League along the way. UFA candidate Alex Moore of Cochrane was elected in the provincial by-election in October 1919, causing Charles Stewart to feel betrayed because he had always cooperated with the UFA. As he said, "Every cent I own is in my farm. I went into the Legislature to further the agricultural interests of the province and accordingly my own. It has been my fight ever since I became a minister to see that the farmers of the province were having a square deal, and I think I have done this with some success."[16]

In addition, Stewart did not agree with Wood's theory of group government, which was based on the idea that farmers, along with labour and other occupational groups, should enter politics as separate economic organizations to end the domination of the rich. As

Stewart stated publicly, "There is a large, representative class of people in our province to which I have always thought myself allied, who have recently formed an organization confined to themselves. This is the agricultural class, and their class party is the outcome of unrest… I have not the slightest bit of faith that class organization of any kind will ultimately be a success."[21] As far as Stewart was concerned, he could not join Henry Wise Wood's movement because, as Premier, he represented urban as well as rural citizens. Despite rumours to the contrary, he never considered becoming leader of the UFA political movement.

The railway question simmered in the background during Stewart's time as Premier, losing its status as a flashpoint for conflict, but contributing to the general dissatisfaction with Stewart and the Liberals. Stewart made no excuses for the mistakes regarding the railways, but in a feisty speech pointed out that the government had a twofold responsibility: one as a guarantor of rail lines and the other as a benefactor to the settlers around those lines. The north had proved itself with exports of grain, fish, and cattle, all due to the presence of the railway.[illegible] Eventually, the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway was taken over by the Stewart government; and the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway and the Central Canada Railway were taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway, after the provincial government had agreed to spend $1 million to improve the line. Like other investment "bubbles" before and since, too many people had jumped on board the railway building craze, and too many people in government had been persuaded to invest in the new technology. Some of the lines were necessary, but the Stewart government was saddled with an aura of incompetence because of the condition of some of the lines and the need to cover their financial losses and contribute to maintenance during the "bust" that followed.

Charles Stewart missed the opening of the 1921 session on February 15, the fourth session of the fourth Legislative Assembly of the province, because he was recovering from an operation to remove his appendix. By all accounts, it was a surreal opening. Stewart was not the only one missing: the Conservative leader, Albert F. Ewing, was also ill; other Conservative members refused to attend; and there was no one to respond to the Speech from the Throne. Even when Stewart returned to the Legislature at the end of February, he left the debate to the Acting Premier, Charles R. Mitchell, until he had regained his strength. In spite of this inauspicious start, the general opinion was that the Liberal government seemed more confident and united than it had in years[illegible] and that Charles Stewart had grown into his job as Premier. By the time it prorogued nine weeks later, it had passed nearly 80 bills, 48 of them amending acts to professional societies and municipal charters. New legislation guaranteed debentures for all irrigation and drainage projects approved by government engineers, including a bill to fully guarantee $5.4 million in bonds to the Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District. At the end of the session, the Premier's Cabinet and caucus colleagues presented him with a gold watch and, in words addressed to "the Chief," recognized the strong and undeviating leadership that he had shown, in spite of his health problems, at a difficult time for the province.

Charles Stewart had been chosen Premier of Alberta for many of the things that he was not: he was not involved in any of the railway scandals, current or past; he was not conspicuously involved in any of the personal battles that had consumed Alexander Rutherford, Frank Oliver, the brothers Arthur and Clifford Sifton, Charles Cross, or any of their followers; he was not a high-powered flamboyant Liberal partisan; he did not let himself get involved in federal Liberal Party machinations over issues such as the conscription crisis; nor did he seem to be high-handed or dictatorial—a criticism levelled at his predecessor, Arthur Sifton. He was an Alberta farmer, a decent family man who believed that government had an important role to play and that good people had a responsibility to be involved. He was over six feet tall, an imposing figure in the Legislature, and a commanding speaker. As the *Calgary Herald* said of him in its column, "Among the Alberta Immortals,"

> [g]enerous nature built Mr. Stewart generously. He is … a big man with a capable looking fist and a very thorough and sane manner of weighing the pros and cons of an argument… He has a clear, keen mind, is fair in debate, has a good control of himself in controversial matter… Mr. Stewart likes a joke, and he does not care whether it is aimed at him or at someone else, so long as it is clever.

The *Lougheed Express* paid tribute by calling him a "stalwart, rugged chap with great broad shoulders, a large head, and kindly blue eyes."

Electoral Defeat

What Charles Stewart's kindly blue eyes could not see, and what the broad shoulders could not stop, was the prairie storm in the form of the UFA that blew through the province when he called an election for July 18, 1921. He had been wary of the UFA, but he may have been emboldened by the results of the June election in Saskatchewan that had returned the Liberal government to power. The Alberta Liberals nominated 61 candidates, the UFA, 45, the Conservatives, only 16, while Labour nominated 11, and there were 21 independents and 2 socialists. Out of respect for Charles Stewart, the UFA organization in Sedgewick did not run a candidate to oppose the Premier.

Albertans sent a decisive message to the 16-year-old Liberal government by electing 38 UFA members to the Liberals' 15, with the other 8 seats being shared by independents and Labour. In spite of suggestions that he might lead the farmers' group himself, Charles Stewart announced that he would stay on as Premier only until the UFA chose a leader. That new leader took office on August 13, 1921, and Charles Stewart walked out of Alberta provincial politics.

He was not finished with politics, however. The federal election in 1921 resulted in a minority Liberal government when 65 Progressives, as the federal wing of the farmers' political movement was called, were elected across the country and no Liberals were elected in Alberta. Stewart was invited to join Mackenzie King's Liberal minority government in December 1921 as minister of the Interior and Mines. He won a by-election in a safe seat in Argenteuil, Quebec, to fulfill the challenging dual role of representing the people of his Quebec constituency and being the sole spokesman of Alberta interests in the Cabinet. Some of his Quebec constituents took exception to his statements during the

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF CHARLES STEWART

Charles Stewart at his desk in Ottawa, c. 1940.

May 1924 budget debate, when he supported steps to eliminate the protectionist tariffs that he said imposed on the masses of people a burden that was out of proportion to the benefits enjoyed by the comparatively few engaged in industry. His views were not welcome to eastern industrialists, particularly the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, whose members claimed that their industries needed protection in order to survive.

When asked about reform of the Senate in 1924, he smiled and commented, "It has often been threatened but never seems to happen." He represented Argenteuil from 1922 until he was able to run—and win—the riding of Edmonton West in the 1925 general election. He represented Edmonton West for 10 years and served as minister of the Interior and Mines, acting minister of Immigration and Colonization, and superintendent general of Indian Affairs. He was defeated by Walter Kuhl in the Jasper Edson riding during the 1935 prairie storm when Social Credit won 15 of 17 federal Alberta seats.

Before then, Stewart had some notable accomplishments in federal politics. As minister in charge of the administration of Dominion Lands, he benefited the mining industry and reduced unemployment in the mines by enlarging international markets for Canadian coal and popularizing Alberta coal in Manitoba and Ontario. Coal producers put on a banquet in Edmonton to thank Stewart for being instrumental in the adoption of the temporary coal rate of $6.75 per ton on coal shipped to Ontario, a rate that covered the actual costs for coal operators. In addition, he encouraged and supported research to benefit the industry. He was awarded the first Randolph Bruce gold medal by the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy for outstanding services to the Canadian mineral industry, an award presented to him by Randolph Bruce, lieutenant-governor of British Columbia.

As minister of the Interior, he was responsible for the administration of waterpower, a responsibility that caught Stewart's imagination. By 1923 he was responsible for advising the Cabinet about international waterway problems and the jurisdictional issues at Niagara, Lake of the Woods, St. Mary and Milk Rivers, Columbia River, and many others. In recognition of his expertise, in 1936 he was appointed chair of the Canadian Section of the International Joint Commission by King George V—the last appointment of a Canadian before the king's death. In 1938 he was named chair of the Canadian Section of the British Columbia-Yukon-Alaska Highway Commission.

Charles Stewart travelled across Canada in his capacity as chair of these sections. He, his wife, and younger children had lived in Ottawa since 1921, but his son George ran the

COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF CHARLES STEWART

Charles Stewart and family, c. 1930. Left to right: Jane Stewart, Charles, Rose Stewart (daughter), Mrs. Chris Marshall (daughter), holding her son, Stewart Marshall.

family farm, so Charles took the opportunity to visit the farm on his trips out west. George's sons—Charles's grandsons—remember the visits when Charles would sit at the head of the table talking about what he was doing and filling the air with smoke from his endless cigarettes. On his visits he supervised peanut scrambles—not for peanuts, but pennies—played checkers with his grandchildren, and helped George's five sons on the farm.

Charles Stewart was part of one of the most important events in Alberta history when, as the minister of the Interior, his was one of the signatures on the "Agreement between the Dominion of Canada and the Province of Alberta regarding the transfer of Alberta's natural resources." It had been a long time coming, and Stewart probably had painful memories of his first days as Premier when he was criticized by one of his own backbenchers for not pushing the issue in 1918.

When Alberta had become a province in 1905, the federal government had kept control of natural resources, a step that Albertans accepted at the time because a generous subsidy was paid to the province in lieu of potential income from those resources. By 1910 sentiment had changed; Albertans, along with their counterparts in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, viewed federal control of their resources as an insult. Attempts to come to an agreement had failed, partly because governments of different political stripes had a vested interest in making it difficult for each other and partly because the western provinces wanted control over their natural resources, but, to the chagrin of the eastern provinces, also wanted to retain the federal subsidy that was paid in lieu of that control. As Premier of Alberta and later as minister of the Interior and Mines, Stewart had lobbied on behalf of Albertans for the transfer of natural resources to the province. In the agreement he signed on December 14, 1929, the federal government surrendered control over natural resources and, in addition, guaranteed an annual financial payment to the western provinces that increased as the population increased.

Conclusion

Charles Stewart died on December 6, 1946, and was buried in the Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, leaving an estate of $21,961. He was predeceased by his wife, Jane, on April 10, 1944. According to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, "In more respects than one, Mr. Stewart's career mirrored the development of Canada itself."

That career took him from the family farm in Strabane, Ontario, to the homestead in Killam, Alberta, where he became the first chair of the local school board, to Edmonton, and then to Ottawa where he served as a federal Cabinet minister and chair of the Canadian section of the International Joint Commission and the British Columbia-Yukon-Alaska Highway Commission. Along the way he was elected to sit as an MLA in Alberta's second election and then became its third Premier. His government consolidated and strengthened legislation that established the infrastructure of a modern province: local government, schools, colleges, universities, workers' compensation, professional societies, social benefits, railways, and telephones. At the same time, Charles Stewart rode the whirlwind of the railway scandals and the conscription crisis, as well as the economic changes brought about by the Great War and the social changes resulting from the suffragist and temperance movements. But the mightiest wind was the farmers' movement, which, along with its successes in Manitoba and Ontario and at the federal level, swept Charles Stewart's government out of power in Alberta and replaced it with the UFA. Stewart had been generally well-liked and an effective Premier, holding together a divided party and putting many useful laws on the statutes, but he could not hold back the fury of the agrarian political revolt, which became a hurricane in Alberta. Perhaps no Liberal Alberta Premier could have fared better.

Notes

1. *Edmonton Journal*, February 22, 1930, Supplement.
2. Ernie McGowan was a relative of Henry McGowan, one of the farmers for whom Charles had worked when he came west for the harvest in 1898. Charles's sister Alice married Henry McGowan.
3. According to family history, the first Alberta homestead was south of Amisk. He filed for that in April 1906. In the fall he abandoned it because he thought that it would be hard to get a school started for his family. He then filed for a homestead two miles south of Killam and moved onto it in the spring of 1907.
4. L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905–1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 170.

5. Frank Oliver was defeated in Edmonton.
6. *The Nutcracker*, February 16, 1917, p. 12.
7. Ibid.
8. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta*, 195.
9. *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 15, 1918, p. 3.
10. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1918, p. 707.
11. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta*, 194.
12. Henry Wise Wood, "The Price of Democracy," *Grain Growers' Guide*, June 20, 1917, pp. 12–13.
13. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1921, p. 831; *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 18, 1921, p. 2.
14. *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 18, 1921, p. 1.
15. Prohibition was eventually ended by the voters in 1923.
16. *Calgary Albertan*, April 12, 1920, p. 4.
17. *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 19, 1921, p. 1.
18. Ibid., April 20, 1921, p. 5.
19. "Proportional Representation System of Voting in Alberta by Next Election, says Premier," *Edmonton Journal*, October 20, 1919, p. 1.
20. *Calgary Albertan*, February 24, 1920, p. 10.
21. Ibid., March 5, 1920, p. 1.
22. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1919, p. 755.
23. Ibid., p. 759.
24. *Calgary Albertan*, April 8, 1920, p. 1.
25. *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 16, 1921, p. 2.
26. *Calgary Herald*, December 28, 1910, p. 1.
27. *Lougheed Express*, April 11, 1913.
28. The Liberals won 34% of the popular vote; the UFA 29%. Charles Stewart's brother-in-law, Charles Wright, his sister Annie's husband, was elected as a UFA MLA in the 1921 election, but died within the year.
29. Thomas, *The Liberal Party in Alberta*, 205.
30. "No Agitation Yet Against Stewart," *Edmonton Journal*, June 13, 1924, p. 1.
31. "Thinks Senate May be Issue Next Election," *Edmonton Journal*, July 24, 1924, p. 2.
32. *Edmonton Journal*, August 21, 1928.
33. Because this was an international appointment, it had to be formally approved by the king

The United Farmers of Alberta Premiers

1921-1935

Herbert W. Greenfield 1921-1925

DAVID C. JONES

Herbert W. Greenfield, 1921–1925

The New Moses

The excitement could not be contained. It was like a long-awaited birth, or better, many births, with 40 midwives and 40 hopes. Locked in an anteroom in the Lougheed Building in Calgary in midsummer 1921, the newly elected United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) were choosing a leader.

The applause began mildly, then reached a crescendo, a "deafening roar," said a witness, "which appeared to shake the girders of the Lougheed Building itself."

The door lurched open.

"Is it Greenfield?" a reporter asked.

Another approving roar answered, then came Greenfield himself in a transport of emotion.

"I will do my best for the farmers and every class in the province of Alberta," he said. Again the applause was deafening.[1]

Herbert W. Greenfield was born at Winchester, England, on November 25, 1869. Educated at Wesleyan School, Dalston, he ended his formal schooling early when his father was bankrupted in a dredging enterprise. A hand aboard a cattle boat in 1892, he sailed to Canada, where he was drawn temporarily to the Sarnia oil venture and later rented a farm at Weston, Ontario. He married Elizabeth Harris of Strathroy, Ontario, in 1900, and the couple had two sons.

Tiring of tenancy, the family moved west in 1904 to Edmonton, Alberta, before homesteading nearby. To fund their new home, Greenfield worked in an Edmonton lumber mill, but before they could settle in, a brush fire destroyed the shelter. The next winter they spent in an abandoned sod hut. Starting again, husband and wife toiled at the mill, before beginning a spacious home four kilometres south of Westlock in 1906.[2]

Over the next 15 years, Greenfield developed a model farm and became a quintessential community leader. For 12 years he served as a school trustee; he was chairman of the local school board and vice-president of the Alberta Educational Association. He was a founder and president of the Union of Alberta Municipalities and a tireless promoter of municipal hospitals. Active in the UFA, he was elected to the executive in 1919, and he chaired the massive UFA conventions of 1920 and 1921 with poise and efficiency.

This backdrop of "robust public spiritedness, [a] sterling character and integrity of purpose," the *Grain Growers' Guide* editorialized in 1921, marked him as a steward and spokesman. Not a candidate in the July election, he won a vacated seat for Peace River by acclamation, and he assumed office as Premier on August 13, 1921.[3]

"No government ever went into office in this country carrying better wishes for its success than the Greenfield government," said the *Calgary Herald* later.[4] Seldom was a leader so eagerly anticipated. Aware of grave provincial difficulties, the *Lethbridge Herald* called Greenfield "the only new Moses that can bridge … the Red Sea."[5]

Agricultural Calamity

Near high noon on November 23, 1925, Herbert Greenfield, sullen and admonished, handed his resignation to Lieutenant-Governor William Egbert. Backbenchers, frustrated with four futile years, had forced him out. The frustration stemmed naturally from the times and from Greenfield's encounter with routine cares and outright calamity. The cares he may have attended to more efficiently, but calamity often has its way or it would not be calamity.

Before 1921 there was an idealist tenor to the farmer and worker movements, an idealism so insistent, and so often thwarted, that it verged on fanaticism. Both movements disdained cultural overseers, the powers that were—wealth, business, old-line parties, and privilege. Henry Wise Wood, the president and millennial guru of the UFA, spoke of the conflict between plutocrats and pawns:

> It will be the epic of the ages. God will marshal and direct the forces of the people; Mammon, the forces of the beasts. Either Mammon will be overthrown and the beasts destroyed, or the people [will] go down together and God [will] stand alone on the wastes of social desolation.

Meanwhile, E.T. Kingsley, a Marxist founder of the Socialist Party of Canada, envisioned the final struggle between capital and labour: "The earth will tremble from the shock as slaves and masters meet in the death grapple in that supreme hour… There will be a smell of blood in the air and the torch will light the heavens with the glare of destruction." "No living thing works unless it is enslaved," Kingsley told a Calgary audience in 1919. "But just as soon as men were enslaved by capitalism, it became necessary to invent some word to express their misery and their agony—and that damned word is W-O-R-K!"

Kingsley and Wood were only half right—the future brought neither revolution nor Armageddon, but it did bring destruction and desolation.

By far the greatest calamity facing Greenfield and his new government was the disaster in the south, compounded by agricultural depression throughout the province during his entire tenure. In 1921 Greenfield called the southern catastrophe "without doubt the most complicated problem that the government has to face."

Because its aridity was well known, southeastern Alberta was the last part of the southern prairies occupied by sodbusters. Filling between 1908 and 1912, the region was fully developed by 1916. From 1901 to 1916 the population had leapt from 4,400 to 102,000; the number of farms, from 2,000 to 31,000; and the area in crop, from 81,000 acres to over 2.7 million acres. Almost half of all Alberta farms in 1916 were in the dry areas, and the wheat crop then and there was 75% of the provincial total.

After the mammoth harvests of 1915 and 1916, the spectre of drought revisited, and a long catastrophe began in 1917. When the United Farmers were elected, the fifth consecutive year of drought was all but complete. The very day of the hosannas for the new Premier, just one column distant in the same paper was a notice that Charles Hatfield, professional rainmaker, had just been paid for delivering four inches of rain for the season. The delivery, alas, was still a drought.

"The government is prepared to stand by its attempts to solve the problem of the

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-2204-11)

Greenfield resting amid crisis, calamity, and controversy, 1924

south," Greenfield promised, "and if, after we have tackled that problem in its fundamentals … the south country should fall, then we are prepared to fall with it." But the southeast was half ruined before Greenfield ever took office, and it was completely ruined by the time he left. Three major commissions, two others on banking and credit, and several lesser studies examined the worst farm abandonment in Canadian history. Every stitch of the problem was floodlit, and every solution was another problem. Moreover, as C.R. Mitchell (Liberal, Bow Valley) said of the massive report of the Survey Board for Southern Alberta in February 1922, "No provision is made for what I consider to be the very essence of the case, viz: quick and decisive action in generous measure."

By midwinter 1923, the disgust of remaining drybelters with Greenfield and his government was complete. Probably no municipality in the history of the west had suffered as much as King Municipality, near the present ghost town of Alderson, between Brooks and Medicine Hat. From 1921 to 1926 the population plummeted from 815 to 153, and it had probably been 1,100 or 1,200 in 1918 or 1919.

On February 5, 1923, Reeve J.R. Johnson wrote Greenfield:

> I have written several times to Mr. Hoadley [minister of Agriculture], but he has gotten now to such an extent that he will not even answer any letters.… We made the worst mistake in our lives when we did not return the Stewart gov[ernment] to power, as the people would not be left to starvation.… From now on I am through with the UFA and farmers' government and certainly regret the time and money I spent during election time and attending UFA meetings, but I have learnt a lesson and no group of farmers will pull the wool over my eyes again.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-114-17)

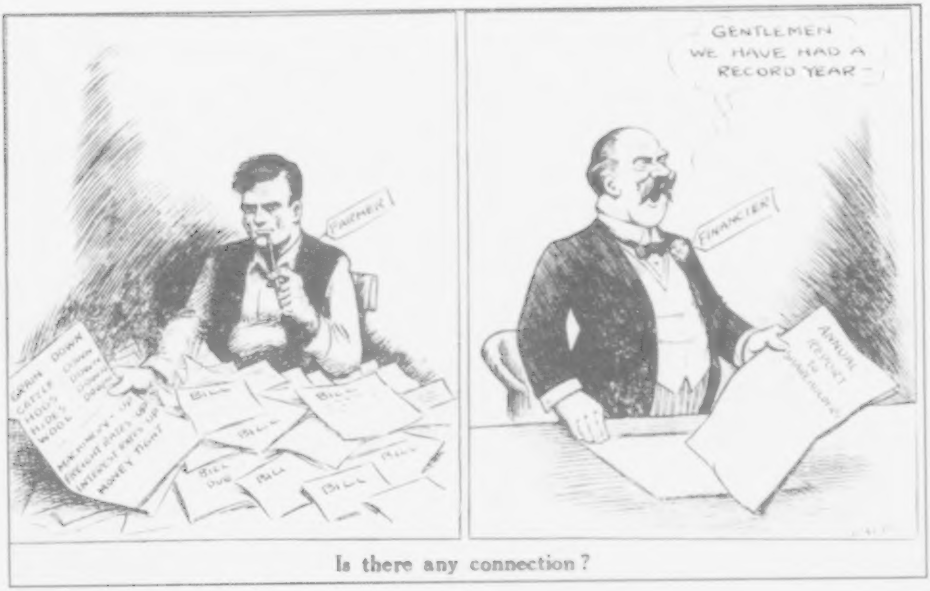
Settlers arriving at Cardston, Alberta, after abandoning their homesteads in the drought-ridden southeast—an exodus that continued throughout Greenfield's term.

With over $5 million shelled out by December-end 1922 for seed grain and relief, the province was nearing bankruptcy. Farmers were still leaving in droves, and short-term help in hopes of maintaining a civilization in the south had vanished. In winter 1923, when Greenfield announced the end of handouts, one legislative reporter noted protest on both sides of the House, combined, ironically, with "depression at the size of the bill."

When J.R. Johnson of devastated King Municipality heard, he rushed another missive to Greenfield. Repeatedly, he had tried to convince Greenfield to visit the desolation. "Now we are faced with the grim truth that we are to be left alone, when we are more in need of assistance than ever before," he fumed. "If I am not mistaken you made the statement that you had confidence in the south and would sink or swim with the people here."

The criticism was in good company. As the world judges things and people, Greenfield looked a failure. In this view, it was not that he and his predecessors had tried nothing, but that everything they had tried *did* nothing. In vain they had hoped that just a few groceries, and the southerners could re-begin; just a little coal, and they would get through winter; just some seed grain and feed oats, and they could reach spring; just a little irrigation, and their crops would flourish; just a larger unit of administration, and local governance would survive; a bigger school district, and schools would hang on; a small adjustment of their debts, and their books would balance.

The most radical solution to the problem was the Drought Area Relief Act of 1922, followed by the Debt Adjustment Act of 1923, the purpose of which was to corral debtors


GENTLEMEN WE HAVE HAD A RECORD YEAR –
FARMER
GRAIN DOWN
CATTLE DOWN
HOGS DOWN
HIDES DOWN
WOOL DOWN
MACHINERY – UP
FREIGHT RATES UP
INTEREST RATES UP
MONEY TIGHT
BILL
BILL
BILL
BILL DUE
BILL
BILL
BILL
FINANCIER
ANNUAL REPORT TO SHAREHOLDERS
Is there any connection?

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-[illegible]-33)

"Bankers from the farmers' perspective." During his premiership, Greenfield felt like the farmers he sought to help: assailed by a host of adversities. This illustration appeared in the Grain Growers' Guide *(March 9, 1921, p. 6).*

and creditors and determine what the former would pay and the latter would accept. The intent was to protect the farmers by avoiding long and costly court appearances and simultaneously to offer the creditors enough that they might not desert the whole province. A half-way moratorium it was—which farmers and creditors closest to the devastation painfully understood, but which outside mortgage investors could never fathom. Adjusting hundreds of debts, it offered solace, but no real satisfaction.

An inquiry into the banking morass of the province did the same. Mindful of costs, provincial debt, and the federal responsibility for banking, it rejected the idea of a provincial bank, to the annoyance of petitioners in the UFA convention. In the end, farmers, bankers, mortgagees, and implement dealers fled the dry belt en masse. Heavily involved in the south, the Union Bank collapsed and was merged with the Royal, the credit of the province fell to pieces, and the 25 loan companies dealing in Alberta in 1915 slipped by early 1924 to four.

It was not hard to be pessimistic about the south and Greenfield's attempt to save it. Restoration of the region as a viable dryland kingdom—Greenfield's vision—was impossible; and restoration as an irrigated oasis was so trouble-torn, it *seemed* impossible.

But given a broader and longer view, possibly seen later, were Greenfield and his government really impotent in the south, and was there ever a simple, speedy remedy? Who could blame the government for offering food to starvelings, or debt adjustment to the destitute? Who could malign officials for taking time to think of concentrating the abandoned lands into "special areas"? How quickly could special areas be created anyway, given thousands of acres and plots whose former owners were gone! Certainly, there were many attempted solutions before outright surrender in the form of near complete abandonment, but who would not have resisted the surrender, and perhaps in the very ways Greenfield's people tried? And if irrigation, the other final solution, began in trouble, at least it began in earnest.

True, Greenfield and his government did not save the "old" south. That battle was lost before he assumed power, and confirmed shortly after. That some condemned him for what the sun and the wind had wrought, along with debt, tariffs, taxes, freight rates, cutworms, plagues, poor prices, and overproduction, was part of the burden of leadership in troubled times.

And trouble overran more than agriculture in those days, and more than the south.

Industrial Calamity

Coal mining was the major non-agricultural industry in Alberta. Early estimates reported that 14% of all coal reserves in the world were in the province, but even the corrected, lower estimates were prodigious. Output rose steadily from 42,000 tons in 1886 to 340,000 tons in 1901, 3,200,000 in 1912, and almost 7,000,000 in 1920. Simultaneously, the values rose from $80,000 in 1886 to $30 million in 1920. And miners' wages jumped from $3 a day in 1909 to $7.50 in October 1920.

Despite these advances, the industry was ill. From 1919 to 1935 it fell under constant scrutiny and required three commissions of inquiry and countless reckonings in every field. Up to 1924 over a thousand mines had been opened, but two-thirds of them lay abandoned in a sea of debt. And the good third was barely above water. The 1925 commission examined 46 mines from 1921 to 1924, representing 76% of the merchantable tonnage of the province. During these four years, 21 of the mines showed a profit and 25, a loss. Together they broke almost dead even, eking out an overall profit of less than one cent a ton.

Operating only seasonally and then only a few days a week, the mines still produced 150% of demand, or more. Fierce continental competition limited markets. Hundreds of "gopher hole" mines opened and closed like shutters in a gale, increasing the general annoyance and instability. Misunderstanding markets as badly as the owners, miners mistrusted their masters and feared for their own livelihood. Between 1906 and 1924, there were 608 fatalities in Alberta coal mines and 827 serious accidents. From 1920 to 1924, 3,300 accidents of all kinds occurred every year.

Uncertainty was the order of the day, and militancy its response. Drawing energy from the Bolshevik movement, class warfare broke out, and strikes paralyzed the industry. In the 30 months to July 1919, 600,000 working days were lost to strikes. In the Drumheller valley alone, there were 28 strikes in 1918.

The detail of the coal problem is important in showing how disinclined the industry and its workers were to harmony, and to the kind of order that Greenfield, the UFA convention chairman, was used to imposing, with the acquiescence of delegates who, despite their differences, were still sons of the soil. The farmers at convention agreed to listen to each other; coal miners and managers were often past listening.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-2513-1)

Greenfield inherited the fierce labour unrest in the coalfields of Alberta. Pictured here are a group of OBU (One Big Union) strikers at Drumheller in 1919.

In Greenfield's first year as Premier, a general strike strangled the Edmonton fields from April 1 to September, after the Western Canada Coal Operators' Association rejected miner demands and set upon reducing wages by 35%. Strikers knocked scabs off their bicycles and fired rocks through the windows of a bus loaded with more scabs. Single strikebreakers were beaten up on their way to work. On December 5, 1922, conditions worsened when police insisted on escorting strikebreakers to work. A horde of picketers descended on Corporal Kirby, three constables and their escorts, hurling rocks and bricks. One constable suffered two broken ribs, another, a gash on the head, and Kirby, a bad blow to the forehead. Shocked, the Alberta police commissioner rushed 12 more men to the scene.

On December 18 the Cardiff Collieries resumed work, and that morning a hundred furious men, women, and children, representing the strikers, arrived, armed with clubs and rocks, and the women with cayenne pepper. As constables Olson and McKay tried to break up a melée at the Alberta mine and convey miners to work, the mob attacked. McKay was severely kicked, and Olson, clubbed unconscious and partially paralyzed.

A hundred miners were arrested at the Standard mine on January 2 for "unlawful assembly." With but six unoccupied cells at Fort Saskatchewan, the provincial jail, authorities thought that only an internment camp could keep them all. On the morning of January 4, near the Humberstone and Bush mines, another serious clash occurred, and mounted police were hit by a fusillade of rocks.

At midnight, on April 5, 1923, the commissioner of the force, W.C. Bryan, slipped into the Beverly field on an inspection tour. Suddenly another vehicle lurched from the bush, and as it tore past, someone fired three slugs into his car. Unhurt, Bryan tried to turn and pursue, but the road was deeply rutted, he spun into a ditch, and the felons escaped. The day before, Bryan had received a note: "You spoilt the strike, and if you go out on the Marcus and Black Diamond road, you will be killed."

Another massive walkout occurred from April 1, 1924, to mid-October, costing miners $2.5 million in wages. Again the conflagration of fury and hate raged out of control. When hundreds, even thousands, focus their mental power on anger, fear, and suspicion, they create the chaos these qualities represent. Anger confuses, fear emasculates, mistrust degrades, and the mounting chaos compounds itself, feeding on staggering energies released by dark thoughts, ill-will, and spite that together deaden creative resolution and seal off even a glimmer of light and fellow feeling.

The magnitude of the madness shocked Greenfield. Naturally friendly, he was discomfited by the war of brothers who could not see their own bloodlines. "The hardest people the government has to deal with are the miners and operators," he regretted in March 1923. "It seems difficult for us to stand between them and the public. They show very little spirit of compromise."

Probably a mahatma could not have quelled these feelings in the coal fields. No one blamed Greenfield for the disturbances, but perhaps some thought that a moral leader might have called for peace more often, more deliberately, and more appealingly than did Greenfield. Moreover, his minister of Public Works, Alex Ross (Labour, Calgary), disagreed with the way the police seemed to side with the operators and never the strikers. Ross was much less inclined than Greenfield to favour police escorts of scabs across picket lines, and this difference disturbed Cabinet.

Other Problems

Prohibition was another matter Greenfield inherited, and another with a life of its own that rang with a discord that could not be quieted. Appearing in a blaze of moral reform in 1916, it was consumed by its own fire. Nothing short of public execution for all infringements could have prevented the black market in illicit traffic that overran Alberta. That Greenfield had promised to uphold a law that half the populace forsook added to his bedevilment.

Police were obstructed everywhere, sometimes even by magistrates sympathetic to local miscreants. "We have had complaints from people about the 'terrible conditions' that exist in their town," said Sergeant Stott, chief of the liquor branch, "and when we have investigated the complaint and caught the offenders, the whole town was up in arms, wanting to hang, draw, and quarter the detectives who were responsible." As stool pigeons of the purity leaguers turned in suspects by the carload, police froze while espying moonshiners and drank poisonous brew to test the effects. When a constable was shot in Coleman in 1922, and bootlegger Emil Picariello and Florence Lassandro were later hanged for the offence—Lassandro, having been convicted without adequate defence—a gloom settled over the whole moral experiment.

A quip in the *Medicine Hat News* captured the futility: "Prohibition is now working smoothly. The only thing left is to stop the sale of liquor!" Such sentiments abounded.

and none reflected well on the government. Snorted A.M. Matheson (UFA, Vegreville), one of Greenfield's own: "This government has acted as philosopher, guide, and God to the people long enough." The comment in January 1923 summarized a growing feeling among UFA supporters.

Then as Greenfield wriggled loose of the prohibition python, he suggested liquor profits might be shared by the municipalities, many of which were debt-ridden and depopulating. The thought was well-intentioned, but unworkable, and it gratified only critics who regularly feasted on scraps of failure.

The government attempts to reestablish the Wheat Pool were unworkable too, for many months. In 1919 a federal grain-marketing body, the Wheat Board, had been set up to stabilize wheat prices. After it was disbanded in 1920, the price of wheat plummeted from $2.31 a bushel to 77¢, leading some to conclude that a new board would restore the former splendour. So the UFA convention called for one, and Ottawa, brimming with Progressives, legislated one—a mandatory marketing agency. A debate ensued in Alberta over whether the new compulsory board was superior to a voluntary pool. With misgivings, Greenfield's administration favoured the former, but when it sought suitable officers, none would accept the task. Into 1923 the impasse continued, when Greenfield finally admitted failure and suggested that the farmers create a voluntary pool themselves. This they did with the help of Aaron Sapiro, a cooperative marketing guru from California. Supporting the self-initiative, the UFA government then passed the enabling legislation and guaranteed loans for cooperative marketing pools.

Another problem during Greenfield's premiership concerned Alberta's involvement in railways. The government had sunk a fortune into several lines, the most important of which was the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway (ED & BC) into the Peace River country. In 1922 Greenfield announced that government expenditure in the form of operating deficits, reconditioning costs, capital costs, and defaulted interest on bonds amounted to $6.7 million. "I have had a sheaf of telegrams from north country centres, urging the government to extend lines through their country this year," he said. "But … the extension work to which we have committed the province this year on northern railways is just as far as the government dare go."

What to do with these revenue-draining lines was a pressing concern throughout Greenfield's tenure, and it involved him in lengthy turmoil. He favoured handing the ED & BC over to the CPR, but Vernor Smith, his minister of Railways, wanted government ownership. A sharp split in the Cabinet occurred in 1923 when Smith and his deputy charged the CPR with dereliction of duty in a contract to recondition the ED & BC. When Greenfield apologized to the CPR in the House for the accusation, he was flayed mercilessly by opposition members for maligning the "good" name of the Canadian Pacific and for repudiating his own minister. "Ministers of the government sat silently in their seats," wrote a reporter, "and listened in evident discomfort to the verbal castigation of their leader."

One legislator, likely W.M. Davidson (Independent, Calgary), added:

> The Premier is generally regarded as a CPR man; the minister of Railways is not a CPR man—decidedly not. Mr. Smith has done well in operating

> the white elephant known as the A & GW [Alberta and Great Waterways Railway], which no person ever expected could be galvanized into anything like life. He [thinks] he could do better with the ED & BC road than the CPR is doing, and many are of like opinion. If the farmer members of the House took a vote between Greenfield and Smith, they would certainly take Smith."[29]

Not until Brownlee became Premier was the railway problem resolved with the sale of the government railroads to the major lines for $25 million, ironically in the way Greenfield preferred.[30]

Another perplexity Greenfield wrestled with was the return of the natural resources to Alberta from the Dominion government. Negotiations between the western provinces and Ottawa dated from the early 1910s, and Greenfield seemed tantalizingly close to securing the transfer in June 1924. But J.R. Boyle, the Liberal leader of the opposition, wrote Prime Minister Mackenzie King that "it is generally conceded here that the Greenfield government is doomed in the next general election unless something extraordinary happens. That extraordinary thing which Greenfield wants to happen now is obtaining from you the natural resources at once."[31] Perhaps the note led King to delay, hoping for the fall of the Alberta government and the return of friendly Liberals. Anyway, the senior government moved at glacial pace. With Greenfield champing at the bit waiting on Ottawa, the federals induced self-paralysis, and King finally informed Greenfield that the Cabinet needed the summer to mull the matter over.

If King sought to topple the farm government this way, he was thwarted. With nothing to show, Greenfield delayed a summer election, and by poll time next year, a rejuvenated party led by the competent Brownlee easily won.

Of all Greenfield's bugbears, likely the greatest was the House itself, for rarely did he have command of it. From the start, the rebellious anti-caucus, anti-party sentiment of the farm members ensured a degree of uncertainty that the despised old-line parties never permitted. In the very first session, Greenfield had no sooner proposed his nominee, O.L. McPherson, for speaker of the House than Alex Moore, UFA member for Cochrane, nominated Dr. Stewart, the lone Conservative member. Stewart graciously refused and saved the hour. "[But] we never knew from day to day as ministers what would happen before the session ended," Brownlee said later.[32]

At the end of a special session that year, the House doubled the sessional indemnity for members from $100 to $200, then, on a whim, added another $50 to match Saskatchewan policy. The largesse, with Greenfield presiding and the entire province suffering, was terribly timed.[33]

When the new government tried to amend the Dairyman's Act in 1922, the bill received first reading and passed without question. During second reading, the minister of Agriculture, George Hoadley, explained everything, and no one said a word. The bill went to the committee of the whole House and was examined clause by clause, and again no one objected. Then, it went to third reading, and still no one spoke—so it passed. "At that stage one of the members behind me rose to inquire if that meant that the bill was finally passed," Brownlee recalled. "The speaker said yes. 'Well,' he said, 'there are a number of us who have some question about some of the clauses in that bill, and we regret very much that we haven't had a chance to express our views.'" One by one, the backbenchers and then the somnolent Liberals got up and savaged some aspect of the bill, and had it not been for the four Labour members the government would have fallen.

"The UFA … looked upon the caucus as conveying by the very name all of the evils of the party system," said Brownlee, "and they thought it was their duty to introduce something new into parliamentary life [and] that is the complete freedom of the individual member. He was to be free to state his views on any subject on the floor of the House regardless of the attitude of the ministers."

To an extent, Greenfield's own accommodating nature encouraged this expression, and he himself sometimes differed with the UFA convention, as when he favoured more immigration and the convention less. Thus did ideology and personal inclination create what traditional parliamentarians called the "rebellion" that bubbled up again and again in Greenfield's time.

In March 1923 J.C. Buckley (UFA, Gleichen) moved that his private bill concerning chiropractic be given second reading. Greenfield and Cabinet disagreed and unanimously opposed the motion, but the motion passed anyway. When the Legislature debated the fate of Government House, someone moved the disposal of the mansion. A single farmer member spoke in favour of the resolution, and, without any cue from the Premier, a vote followed. The next day Greenfield said he had voted against the motion and was flabbergasted when it carried. "If he was so keen about Government House, why did he not say something in defence of it?" one member retorted. "Not that it would have changed our votes, but as he did not make a fight for it, why is he so thunderstruck now?"

Exasperated by unbalanced budgets, T.C. Milnes (Claresholm) crossed the floor in April 1924, without prior notice. Elected as an independent, he had chosen to sit with the UFA, so it was not the same as losing a "real" son, but it was warning enough.

In his maiden speech 11 months on, W.T. Henry (Liberal, Edmonton) recalled that Greenfield had recently told an eastern audience that had he remained in England he would have failed in business. "The Premier's management of the affairs of the province proves he was probably correct in that view," quipped Henry. Greenfield grinned, painfully.

Long before, John Brownlee had emerged as the finest mind in the Legislature, one on whom Greenfield relied heavily. As one observer noted:

> He has a dominating influence in the House, which is somewhat amazing. Time after time I have noticed private members on the government side of the House watching to see how the attorney general voted on some questions, and then follow him in the decision. [They] have complete confidence in his honesty and sincerity, and are convinced by his judgment. He is the best debater in the House, and when he concludes his address there is not much left in the debate. I do not believe that any one man has had so much influence in the Alberta Legislature since the latter days of the late A.L. Sifton.

In the 1924 session Alex Ross told Brownlee that disgruntled backbenchers were about to ask for Greenfield's resignation. Brownlee retorted that his own resignation as attorney general would follow immediately. As he himself was the choice as successor, the plotters fell quiet a while. But the very next session a delegation of private members grasped the nettle and asked Greenfield to quit. Again Brownlee determined to follow, but H.W. Wood intervened. Brownlee told Wood he would assume the premiership if Greenfield appealed to him personally, without grudge or grievance, for Brownlee had never undermined him. Half an hour later, Greenfield appeared at Brownlee's home, "as big as he ever was or bigger," said Brownlee, who accepted the call.

Sadly, Greenfield read of his resignation in the papers before it was publicly announced. In tears, he told reporters, "I'm through with politics for good. You knew more than I did."

"Fear of what may happen at the next provincial election has induced the farmer members to lead Greenfield to the slaughter," the *Calgary Herald* editorialized. "What a spectacle it is! This group of farmer politicians who have always claimed to be pure[r] than those of other parties, who claimed possession of higher ideals than ever before guided political parties, throwing their leader to the wolves in the hope that they may save their own skins!" In but a year every promise lay broken. "The high protestations evaporated. The fine ideals were kicked aside. Both decision and courage were lacking. And there is now this climax, this scene of a power-seeking party thrusting all the blame for its misdeeds upon one man, making him the sacrificial goat." The editorial finished: "Greenfield was not a good political captain, but he had a poor set of officers and a mutinous crew."

To some the coup was puzzling. "It was rather mystifying," thought Edmonton journalist Clarence Stout, "to find the most commanding personality probably in the province before a rural and even an urban audience while municipalities president and the UFA executive, become an uncertain and disappointing helmsman in the Legislature." Brownlee later acknowledged,

> Of all of the men I have met in my career, I do not know of anyone for whom I had a higher regard than Herbert Greenfield. He was a big man with a fine personality. A habit of friendship easily expressed. He made friends wherever he went. He had a good mind. He was a good speaker. When he was on the platform he handled himself very well indeed, and there isn't any doubt in my mind, taking into consideration all of the qualities needed for the leadership of a party, I think Herbert Greenfield was the outstanding man in that group.

That the brightest legislator of the period saw also the beauty of Greenfield's character, marked the two men well.

Were there deeper explanations of the fall? Greenfield certainly did not want the job in the first place, he did not anticipate its labours, then he chose to be provincial secretary and provincial treasurer to boot. Shortly after becoming leader, he remarked, "In all my life I was only out of a job once and that was only for two weeks, and I thought I knew what work was, but I didn't. I used to just have time for meals, now I don't even have that."

Personal sorrow struck almost immediately, too. In January 1922 Greenfield's wife, Elizabeth, entered hospital in Edmonton and underwent an operation "in order," said the *Edmonton Bulletin*, "that her husband would have no unnecessary worry during his first session."[illegible] Shockingly, she died, leaving the Premier and his sons grief-stricken. Thus Greenfield began his momentous journey sorely weakened, his heart elsewhere, shorn of its love and chief support. Even when he regrouped, the old resolve seemed missing, and he was often afflicted with throat, laryngitis, and respiratory ailments.[illegible]

Moreover, his inner nature was not up to the task. A man gifted with so many social graces is seldom suited to the confrontation of parliamentary debate, which is a system of attack and counterattack that polarizes thought and that creates and even relishes error in others. A Legislature can resemble a slaughterhouse wherein one can die many times. It can easily overpower the aroma of friendliness that was Greenfield's basic fragrance, and it can crush the fellow feeling that he naturally extended. Little wonder he was rendered ill, speechless, and depressed at times; and even less wonder that he preferred the warmth of harmony and the loveliness of a garden to the tumult of a divided House. At times, he must have felt with Henry Adams that politics was "the systematic organization of hatreds."[illegible] He was criticized for showing visitors the delights of the parliament buildings while the province was stuck in its many problems, but that is what he loved to do, and that is who he was. It may not have made him a politician, conniving, cunning, or punishing, but it did make him gracious and genial.

A pity it is that unless observers see a clear monument, a milestone, a distinct culmination, they often cannot see progress, or even change; nor can they attribute imperceptible accomplishment to anyone. Almost none of the difficulties Greenfield faced could be handled instantaneously. The fruit might drop suddenly, but its maturing took time. In the dry areas, municipal government was collapsing, and it collapsed a bit at a time, month by month, and the land was reverting to the state for taxes, and it reverted year by year. This gradual process that now seems sudden necessitated a new system of administration in the form of special areas, but the nature of the system and the role of the remaining settlers could not be immediately divined. In the coal fields, the old and dangerous economy was marching inexorably away, but only an oracle could foresee its end and the timing of what would replace it. Its inherent agonies could not be accelerated or foreshortened. In just 30 years it would succumb, taking to the grave all its afflictions in a dramatic, final solution that could never have been imposed in 1924.

So much of Greenfield's tenure was like that—watching and waiting for events to ripen, for the solutions to find themselves, or for the popular energy to concentrate. The prohibition problem and the wheat pool problem thus worked themselves out in their own way, and the railway problem and the natural resources problem were in process of resolution when Greenfield resigned.

What manner of Premier had he been? "Uncommitted," several said, but if that meant uncaring or apathetic, it was unfair. In other senses, it was apt, however. Greenfield was uncommitted to the ancient clannishness of politics, its segregation of humanity into tribes, its separation of potential friends into opponents. He was uncommitted to a prolonged attempt to harmonize social classes that preferred discord; uncommitted to a life that concentrated on problems and perplexity and that was wrung so tightly it squeezed out lightness and joy. He was uncommitted to the vastness of the Premier's job, its bulk and comprehensiveness, which became to him a dead weight that negated his gifts and stifled his spirit. Fundamentally, he was uncommitted to a world of depression and defeat. The world itself might bear such anguish and disquiet—the dry belt might be ruined, the coal industry, crippled; prohibition, undone; group government, unworkable; provincial finances, insupportable—but these failings were not a part of Greenfield's perception of himself. They were a reality, it is true, but one that Greenfield stepped beyond when he left politics. Following the decision to end government handouts to the beleaguered south, he had declared that the people, for their own good, would have to help themselves. This old principle of self-help, self-reliance, he now applied to his own estate.

Later Life

In 1926 Greenfield's life turned for the better. He married Marjorie Greenwood Cormack, widow of an Edmonton solicitor, and Brownlee appointed him Alberta's agent general in London, England. There he served with distinction, reigniting his old affable self, promoting Alberta and raising investment for the new energy source, oil and gas.

Joining the board of directors for Calmont Oils in 1932, he became vice-president the next year and later president of the Oil and Gas Association, director of Home Oil, managing director of the British Dominions Land Settlement Corporation, and president of the Calgary Board of Trade. In these offices he set aside old nemeses—the catastrophe on the southern plains, the fierce wars in the coal fields, the moral badgering of prohibition, and the political storms of eternal opposition—and in his own manner, he helped turn the province toward a new day, a new economy.

Greenfield lived in Calgary the rest of his life, working till the end in his office in the General Trusts Building. His address was 2912 Elbow Drive, a spot of tranquil beauty at the foot of Mount Royal along the meandering Elbow River that glistens in the morning. His home was a sanctuary of comfort and relative calm, sheltered from the turmoil of prairie winds and surrounded by gardens. The house is gone now, faded into the landscape, but the serenity of the scene remains. In sunny, late May, among the firs and poplars, the lilacs, maydays, Nanking cherries, and caraganas bloom; and in fall, the colours of maturity accent the valley. The setting harmonized with Greenfield's nature and with his affection for things that grew naturally, without protest, contention or clangour, but with the silent exclamation of a flower.

One day in late summer 1949, when the river ran lower, Greenfield suddenly fell ill, and the next morning, at 8:25, on August 23, in the Holy Cross Hospital near his home, he died, at age 80. At his funeral at Grace Presbyterian, the Reverend Dr. Frank Morley praised Greenfield's vitality and kindness, his deep faith in people, and his boundless capacity for friendship. The mourners then conveyed their friend, the former Premier, to Union Cemetery, Calgary.

Notes

I am deeply indebted to SSHRC for a grant to study the United Farmers of Alberta, to Marion Frantz for her superb archival assistance, and to Brad Rennie for sharing his research.

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John E. Brownlee 1925-1934

FRANKLIN L. FOSTER

John E. Brownlee, 1925–1934

Introduction

The only reason John Brownlee became Premier of Alberta was that he was clearly more competent than any of his colleagues. His competency was based on rationality: the ability to thoroughly analyse problems, exhaustively research potential solutions, and use reason to persuade others to implement his decisions. Further, to his solid education and superior mental abilities he added a staggering capacity for hard work. On top of everything, there was a fundamental belief, taught to him in childhood and nurtured by the idealism of his generation, that through his work he could accomplish the basic precepts of Christian life: helping humanity and fostering his own spiritual growth. So it was that someone who never farmed became a major leader of western Canadian agriculture for over 40 years. So it was that a man committed to fair and equitable compromise within the existing legal, political, and economic framework became the leader of the most radical government in Canada. So it was that a boy from Ontario would go on to make major contributions to the development of the West and establish the foundation for the emergence of Alberta as a leading force within Canada.

Yet his story includes the tragic irony that, despite the major contributions his competency allowed him to make, his political career was overwhelmed by two bizarre episodes of irrationality. First, the severity of the world's worst depression caused Albertans to abandon his leadership and emotionally pursue an untried, ultimately unworkable monetary theory called Social Credit. Secondly, his political opponents were able to topple him by orchestrating sensationalized scandal charges portraying him as the exact opposite of that to which his career testified. However, his competency allowed him to recover from his political demise and make major contributions again in law and business. Sadly, though, the people of Alberta, for whom he so long laboured and to whom he contributed so much, have not granted him the recognition and reward he so richly deserves—a place in our history as one of the most competent Premiers of Alberta.

Early Life

Brownlee began life in the quiet, tree-covered village of Port Ryerse, Ontario, on the north shore of Lake Erie. His parents, William and Christina, operated the general store that served the few villagers and the many surrounding farm families. John Edward Brownlee, named after his two grandfathers, was born on August 27, 1883. His sister, Maude, arrived five years later and would complete the family. Business had declined in Port Ryerse after the railroad was built through Simcoe, further inland, so when the local grist mill burned in 1890 the Brownlees moved west to Bradshaw, near Sarnia.

Bradshaw was a quintessential "four-corners," containing only a Methodist church, a one-room school, a blacksmith shop, and a general store that the Brownlees managed for the owner in nearby Brigden. Probably because of its deep Loyalist roots, Port Ryerse had been a conservative community. The Brownlees found Bradshaw much more amenable. Christina was soon enthusiastically involved in the Methodist church of her youth, and William enjoyed the political discussions in this heartland of Liberal support. With the death of Sir John A. Macdonald in 1891 and the subsequent turmoil in the Conservative Party, southwest Ontario was abuzz with the prospects of a new Liberal era dawning.

Young John began his school career in Bradshaw. There were more than 60 students, and Brownlee and the blacksmith's son were the only ones who did not live on a farm. Brownlee was a shy and thoughtful boy. There were no tales of sports successes or social adventures. He was a serious, competent student, took a growing part in the young people's club at church, and helped his parents with the work of the store. By the time he reached grade eight, he had occasionally occupied a small place in the popular public-speaking presentations at the church.

In 1897 Brownlee became one of the few who pursued education beyond the eighth grade. To do so, he had to take room and board in Sarnia and attend Sarnia Collegiate Institute. The curriculum was classical, emphasizing English literature, grammar, rhetoric, and composition. Latin was required, but a science was optional. Brownlee was described as "diligent" and "hard-working."[1] During these years, he stretched up quickly to his adult height of six feet, four inches. Residents of Brigden saw him alighting from the train and striding out on his incredibly long legs, quickly covering the six miles to Bradshaw where he still helped out at the family store on holidays and even continued in his church's speaking programs.

In September 1901 Brownlee enrolled in the Sarnia Model School to take the 15 weeks of instruction and practicum then necessary to qualify as a teacher. He graduated second in his class of 20 and in January 1902 assumed his first teaching position, at his old school in Bradshaw. His size and seriousness gave him a presence, and he was remembered as a "competent teacher."[2] With the weight of his teaching position, he blossomed as a public speaker and sometimes toured the local region.

After two and one-half years, Brownlee decided he wanted a career beyond that of a local school teacher, so he enrolled in the University of Toronto. As a Methodist, he registered at Victoria College and became part of the Old Vic Class of '08, a group with whom he had many lasting ties, including his best friend, Fred Albright. He remained a serious, hard-working student, almost always in the top quarter of his class, but by his second year he was involved in a number of extra-curricular activities. He worked on the staff of his college's magazine, *Acta Victoriana*, rising to business manager. He was a member of the well-known Glee Club, not as a singer but, typically, as their business manager, looking after all the arrangements for successful tours of southern Ontario.

Each summer vacation was filled with jobs to replenish his finances. One year he was off to Britain with classmates to sell stereoscopic slides. Another year it was out to southern Manitoba to sell a one-volume encyclopaedia to farmers. In his final summer, he and Albright attended a conference of the Young Men's Christian Association. In his written report, he reflected the lofty values of the time and his own thinking as well:

> Each man is a missionary, for through his vocation he exerts an influence over others and has therefore a responsibility to exemplify the higher

> spiritual values… . For to us much is given, and from us much will be required, and if we who are about to become leaders among our fellow men fail to do our duty, what can be expected from those to whom Fortune has not been so generous?[5]

Brownlee graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Arts degree in June of 1908. He and Albright then slowly travelled across Canada selling office supplies, and, more importantly, surveying the opportunities in law, the profession they both had determined to follow. They decided boom-town Calgary presented the best opportunities, and Albright moved there at once. Brownlee spent the winter in Toronto, still in sales. At a skating party he met Florence Edy, a student at McMaster College. The two struck up a friendship, and when Florence's mother, a widow, moved the family to Calgary, Brownlee followed. He was soon rooming with Albright and secured a position with the firm of Lougheed, Bennett, Allison & McLaws.

In that era one worked for a firm, doing a wide variety of tasks and "reading the law" to prepare for the bar examinations. Brownlee was closely tutored by R.B. Bennett and was amazed by his encyclopaedic knowledge of case law. Brownlee later changed his articles to the firm of Muir, Jephson & Adams where he was tutored by James Muir, K.C. As well, his relationship with Florence Edy, who was teaching at High River, blossomed, and the two were engaged to be married as soon as Brownlee was called to the bar. True to the agreement, Brownlee was admitted to the Bar of Alberta on December 16, 1912, and exactly one week later he and Florence were married in Toronto.

Once back in Calgary, Brownlee resumed his work with Muir, Jephson & Adams, which already did work for the fledgling United Farmers of Alberta (UFA). Already western farmers felt alienated from the federal government's so-called "national policy," and after the defeat of freer trade in the 1911 election they redoubled their efforts to take control of their own industry. The UFA moved quickly, and Brownlee was part of the committee that formed the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company Limited (AFCEC). Because of the high demands for capital in the grain-buying business, the AFCEC was soon reaching out to the Grain Growers' Grain Company, the Manitoba-based pioneer of farmer-owned grain companies. It soon became obvious there were advantages to a formal merger. There were many legal and political hurdles to surmount, and Brownlee played an important role in the emergence of the United Grain Growers Ltd. (UGG) on September 1, 1917.

There was no cause for celebration at the time. The newspapers were filled with optimistic stories about the progress of the Great War in Europe, belied by the grim lists of casualties. On Friday, October 26, 1917, at Passchendaele, Fred Albright became one of the many thousands to die in the blood-soaked quagmire that passed for a battlefield. Brownlee and Florence joined in attempting to comfort Albright's widow, Evelyn, and in pondering the impact of the ongoing slaughter. Like Albright, so many of those dying exemplified the lofty values of altruism, optimism, and idealism and would have been exemplary leaders in their families, their professions, and their country. What would be the impact of their loss on the future morality of society? In large measure the enthusiasm of the reform movements that swept the West in this era, including the farmers' movement, was powered by a desire to make sure the sacrifice was not in vain. The flower of a generation had died to make a better world, and reformers were committed to making sure that happened—and soon.

The Election of the United Farmers of Alberta

Brownlee was soon back piloting the UGG merger through the first annual meeting. His performance won him the admiring attention of many farmer leaders, including the president of the UFA, Henry Wise Wood, who would play a central role in Brownlee's life. Wood and Brownlee were an unlikely couple. "HW," as everyone in Alberta called him, was a tall, lanky farmer born in pre-Civil War Missouri, equally adept at inspirational speeches filled with Christian piety, and earthy anecdotes among farmers as he slouched at the back of a meeting hall. Although even taller than Wood, Brownlee was reserved, traditional, and cautious. Nevertheless, they recognized and admired each other's contrasting yet complimentary talents. They made several trips together, touring UFA locals across the province. Brownlee would answer legal, membership, and financial questions with a seriousness and thoroughness that convinced the listeners. Then he would take a seat and watch the care-worn faces of the farmers and their wives brighten as HW, with his unique mix of rural idiom and religious inspiration, explained how the farmers' movement was a part of God's master plan to remove conflict, competition, and injustice from the world and replace them with harmony, co-operation, and equity for all. Brownlee now handled much of the legal work for both the UGG and the UFA. As the UGG business grew, he also became manager of a trial insurance and investment division. However, in the sharp depression following World War I, the business retracted, and the farmers' movement was swept by those calling for direct political action. In mid-1919 Alberta witnessed a remarkable series of debates between sometime preacher, William Irvine, advocating the formation of a farmer-labour political party, and crusty Henry Wise Wood, recalling the failed experiment of the Populist Party in the United States, urging farmers to enter politics only as an occupational group. Wood's view prevailed, and the UFA, swept by zealous political enthusiasm, ran farmer candidates in all 44 rural ridings in the provincial election of July 18, 1921.

Brownlee took his family on vacation to Victoria during the election campaign. The family now included sons John, 5½, and Alan, almost 4, along with Brownlee's sister, Maude, who helped care for the boys as Florence slowly recuperated from complications following a still-birth delivery in 1919. Still in Victoria, Brownlee received a cryptic telegram from HW. "The tide is running high. Your services will be required. Be ready."[4]

There was even more surprise when Brownlee returned to Calgary. The UFA had won 38 of the 61 seats in the Legislature, and Wood wanted Brownlee to be the Premier of Alberta. Wood could have easily become Premier, and his suggestion of Brownlee was inexplicable to most. However, Wood saw government, with its concern for laws and legalities, as requiring Brownlee's strengths, and, further, he saw the provincial government as only one part of a larger and more significant farmers' movement that he would continue to head. "I'd sooner be president of the UFA than the USA," he would sometimes quip.[5]

Brownlee, fully aware that the UFA had campaigned on the need for authentic farmer representation, had the good sense to recognize that Wood's suggestion was unworkable. The UFA eventually recruited Herbert Greenfield for the position. As things unfolded, it became evident that wily old HW had been correct in offering the premiership to Brownlee.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-1900-20)

The man who declined to be Premier—Henry Wise Wood (c. 1920). As president of the victorious UFA in 1921, he was widely expected to become Premier, but he privately favoured his friend and protégé, John Brownlee. Wood played an important role in Brownlee's career and in the history of Alberta.

The first example of Brownlee's importance to the Greenfield government came during the deliberations over the selection of the first Cabinet when they had to ask him for a legal opinion as to whether or not the Attorney General needed to be a lawyer. Brownlee answered that if the Attorney General were not a lawyer he would be "dependent almost entirely on the advice of his deputy minister or other members of his staff, since his duties consist almost entirely of matters of law."[6] His answer convinced all but a few reluctant radicals to accept his appointment as Attorney General, but they would soon realize that Brownlee's duties would go far beyond mere "matters of law."

During his tenure as Attorney General, John Brownlee dealt with a vast range of issues, the most controversial involving the enforcement of the province's prohibition legislation. Alcoholic beverages were treated as prescription drugs under the law, and there were ongoing accusations that some medical doctors were signing far too many prescriptions for brandy, gin, and the like. Some claimed that the Alberta Provincial Police (APP) were not vigorous enough in pursuing those manufacturing and distributing alcohol through the black market. Brownlee, irked by these complaints, pointed out that manufacturing was under federal jurisdiction, outside the realm of the APP. Many, even in the UFA, dismissed this as "lawyer talk" to avoid enforcing prohibition.

Brownlee also pointed out that three APP members had been killed contending with rampant "rum running." The murder of Special Constable Steve Lawson by the notorious rum runner, Emil Picariello, and a "female companion" caught national attention. The pair was soon captured, and when brought to trial Brownlee took the unusual step of sitting at the prosecution bench in order to underline the government's resolve to enforce law and order. When both the accused were sentenced to be hung, Brownlee believed the vigour of the law had been demonstrated.[7]

When the various appeals were exhausted, Brownlee was besieged by wailing and gesticulating relatives demanding to receive the bodies after the executions. Brownlee had heard rumours that an ostentatious funeral was planned in Blairmore, a "hero's welcome" that might spark further violence in "the Pass." Brownlee met with Roman Catholic Archbishop O'Leary and worked out an agreement that the bodies would be released to the families only if they were buried in an Edmonton-area cemetery. The families agreed to this classic Brownlee compromise.

Early on May 2, 1923, the two, whom the press termed "the bootleg king and his female accomplice," were hung. (Florence Lassandro would earn notoriety as the only female ever executed in Alberta.) However, public opinion was turning against prohibition. The executed, along with the murdered constable, were now all seen as victims of legislation that, Brownlee noted, "a large segment of society did not actively support."[8] Therefore, after a plebiscite had confirmed the unpopularity of the prohibition law, he set about devising a compromise between strict prohibition and the "open bar." Brownlee drafted legislation providing for retail sale of alcohol, but only through strictly controlled, government-owned liquor stores. The resulting Alberta Liquor Control Board and its network of outlets served Alberta for almost 70 years. It was another compromise in which Brownlee took pride.

Also while Attorney General, John Brownlee played a crucial role in the creation of the Alberta Wheat Pool. His background as solicitor for the UGG and other farmer-owned companies and co-operatives served him well. The spread of the pools to Saskatchewan and Manitoba and the creation of a central marketing agency, which tried to recruit Brownlee as its general manager, offered hope that farmers had found a way to avoid the ravages of the boom-and-bust cycle.

Quickly Brownlee had emerged as the most competent spokesperson for the government, especially in dealing with the challenges and taunts of the Liberal opposition in the Assembly. The Liberals were miffed that the UFA had usurped their accustomed place as the governing party and sought to take advantage of the naïve and gullible UFA members. After some stinging charges in the Assembly, even the UFA advocates of ending "partyism" could scarce forebear to cheer when Brownlee parried Liberal shots and came out the better. In contrast, there was growing evidence that Premier Greenfield was beyond his depth. Some members were aware, and the rest suspected, that most of the important files were routed to Brownlee with a simple memo that stated: "Kindly let Mr. Greenfield know what to reply to this."[9]

Greenfield's ineptness worried UFA members more as the time for the next provincial election neared. The farmer government in Ontario had been swept away, and the Liberal opposition was increasingly confident that they could return to power by characterizing the UFA in terms applicable to Premier Greenfield—well-meaning, perhaps, well-intentioned, possibly, but despite all, not nearly competent enough to be entrusted with the serious business of governing Alberta.

So it was that some stalwart UFA MLAs broached the idea of a leadership change to Brownlee. He rejected any possibility of disloyalty, so Henry Wise Wood was recruited to again urge the premiership on Brownlee. "If I had the ability, I'd damned sure take it," Wood proclaimed in his gravelly bass voice, "but it's you, John, who has the ability."[10] However, only when Greenfield himself declared he would bear no grudge did Brownlee accept. On November 23, 1925, John E. Brownlee became the Premier of Alberta.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-1451-11)

This official photograph, taken shortly after he became Premier in 1925, shows something of John Brownlee's intense seriousness and steely resolve.

The Premiership

The major issue facing Brownlee as Premier was what he termed "the competent management of the province's financial situation."[11] There was always something of the accountant in how Brownlee approached any issue—toting up the credits and debits on their separate sides of a question. The most glaring expense item resulted from that long-running financial quagmire surrounding the provincially owned railways. In addition, there was the ongoing need to closely monitor the province's financially exposed agricultural sector. But while others might concentrate only on slashing expenses, Brownlee aimed also to add revenues, particularly in the longer term. He had realized, long before most others, that the key to accomplishing this goal was the successful completion of the seemingly everlasting negotiations to transfer to Alberta, from the federal government, the control of the Crown lands and natural resources.

With a provincial election needing to be called before July 1926, Brownlee moved quickly to generate progress on at least some of the issues. In so doing he revealed his superior command of political strategy and his growing reputation on the national stage. First, he met with the UFA members of Parliament to obtain their support and coordinate efforts. There was a unique opportunity to use their leverage. The Liberals had been dealt a setback in the 1925 federal election, returning with fewer seats than the Conservatives. However, to the utter frustration and contempt of the Conservative leader, Arthur Meighen, Prime Minister W.L. Mackenzie King clung to power on the strength of support from the so-called Progressives—including the UFA. Withdrawal of UFA support in the House of Commons would mean the immediate defeat of the King government.

Believing that he had the support of the UFA MPs, Brownlee sent off a string of telegrams to the Prime Minister urging immediate action on such matters as freight rates, the provincial railways question, and, of course, the transfer of control of lands and resources to Alberta. In January 1926 he took the train to Ottawa and assured King that the UFA would support the shaky Liberal government, especially once the transfer of control of the natural resources was announced in the Throne Speech.

On his eastern trip, Brownlee also dealt with the issue of the defunct Alberta railways.

The largest was the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia (ED & BC), whose major shareholder had become the Royal Bank. Brownlee and his minister of Railways, Vernor Smith, went to the bank's head office in Montreal and secured an agreement to purchase the $2 million in shares for $1.3 million. As majority owner, the Alberta government now had the latitude to sell, lease, or even operate the railway, perhaps as part of a system with its other provincially owned rail lines.

Back in Ottawa, Brownlee convinced King to agree in principle to the transfer of control of the resources to Alberta. The details and timing would be worked out by a joint commission. Brownlee had secured the commitment that successive Alberta governments had sought since 1905 when Alberta and Saskatchewan were created as second-class provinces, without control of their own lands and natural resources.

There it was. In less than six weeks as Premier, Brownlee had made important progress on almost all the major issues facing the province. A large part of the reason for this success was his ability to deal with bank and railway presidents, federal ministers, and even the Prime Minister himself as one among equals. Unlike Greenfield, he did not have to rely on advisors to explain intricate financial and legislative details. He projected an air of competence and confidence. King referred to him as "Brownlee of Alberta," and that title, suggestive of his authority to speak for his adoptive province, was to sum up his place in Canadian affairs for almost a decade.

There were to be some complications. As the discussions regarding the details of the transfer of control of the lands and natural resources got under way, the federal government asked for the attachment of a rider requiring Alberta to administer the remaining school lands and the school-lands fund "in accordance with the provisions of Section 17 of the Alberta Act."[12] In 1905, when the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were carved out of the North-West Territories, Section 17 upset those who had hoped for only one publicly funded school system. Instead, following a Territorial ordinance of 1901, it provided for public funding of all schools but allowed for Catholic or Protestant minorities to have a separate school where numbers warranted. Now, in 1926, the *Orange Sentinel* of Toronto characterized the rider as forcing Alberta to support Catholic schools. Brownlee resented the attempt to stir up religious controversy in a province where "we have all been living peacefully." He sent a telegram to King expressing his concern at raising "the whole question of provincial rights in relation to education."[13] In fact, the rider had been inserted precisely to reassure French Canada that in transferring control of the natural resources the rights of the Catholic minority to separate schools would be protected. Since the King government depended mightily on its Quebec support, the prospect of changing or withdrawing the rider was slim or none. Neither for the first nor the last time the attempt of westerners to direct their own affairs precipitated a squabble between Quebec and Ontario over how the West would be ruled.

With evident progress as the new Premier, along with an instance of federal intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, Brownlee called a general election for June 28, 1926. He stood firmly on the record, calling it "Five Years of Progress."[14] In campaign speeches across the province, Albertans saw him, extraordinarily tall, well over 200 pounds, fixing them with a rivet-like gaze from behind the strong lenses of his circular, wire-framed glasses. He spoke of his belief that government was "essentially the administration of business," and he reviewed the issues and accomplishments dryly as one might present an annual report to a meeting of shareholders.[15] There was little personality, but his competence shone through, and the election results were most gratifying. Not only did the UFA become the first "farmer government" to win re-election, it actually increased its majority—by three seats. One of the gains was in Edmonton where lawyer J.F. Lymburn, a Brownlee recruit before the election, won and assumed the duties of Attorney General, relieving Brownlee of much of the minutiae he had carried for five years.

The election results dashed the fond hopes of the Liberals of sweeping back into power, and they saw, perhaps more clearly than most, that it was Brownlee who had saved the government and cost them their places in the halls of power. Some began to speak darkly of the "Brownleeites." Brownlee's great strength became a UFA weakness because it became clearer as time went on that if the Liberals could remove Brownlee, the head, then the UFA body would evaporate. Brownlee himself knew that the grassroots fervour that had swept the UFA to power in 1921 was fading away. He wrote in a memo to the UFA executive that "in two or three constituencies [there was difficulty] in even getting a nomination meeting together because the locals had pretty much passed out of existence."[16] Despite Brownlee's warnings, UFA officials resisted the obvious need for stronger direction by a central organization because of their commitment to the dream of an active, grassroots-based political movement.

For the time being, though, with a fresh and strengthened mandate, Brownlee settled into the routine of administration and the task of forming his own Cabinet. Alex Ross, a Labour member, who had been minister of Public Works and Labour, lost his seat in the general election, and Brownlee chose not to reach out to the Labour members to replace him. Instead he named O.L. McPherson, a headstrong farm leader, as the new minister. The move showed Brownlee's resistance to those who continued to advocate farmer-labour cooperation and a much more socialist agenda. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, where farmers' organizations were politically weaker, this cooperation with labour was pursued, but in Alberta it was not necessary. Brownlee's strength allowed him to pursue his inclination.

Another of Brownlee's appointments also generated controversy: his naming of the former Premier, Herbert Greenfield, as Alberta's representative in Britain. Even UFA members regarded the appointment as a political reward for the now redundant Greenfield. Brownlee forcefully defended his appointment, and Greenfield's outgoing personality and familiarity with Alberta did enable him to perform well in his role of advising emigrants and hosting Albertans on visits to Britain. Brownlee regarded the appointment as a good business choice, but some saw not business as usual but politics as usual and lamented the passing of the glory days of the UFA.

Brownlee's dominance was even evident at the Cabinet table. His habit was to introduce issues as problems to be solved. He would list all the possible solutions, which he had exhaustively researched. He would then produce an itemized list of the pros and cons of each solution. Only then would he invite comments to point out aspects he had overlooked. There was usually little to say. Often his review had left the answer obvious. However, when it was not, the decision-making process was long and arduous.

Despite the signs of distancing between the UFA organization and the UFA government, Brownlee was the key-note speaker at the 1927 UFA annual convention. Telling the delegates that they were "fostering an active, aggressive public opinion" and were making a great "contribution to the welfare of Alberta,"[17] he made them proud, just as Henry Wise Wood had done a decade earlier. Brownlee had gone from being a mere source of information to being a source of inspiration. He had assumed the mantle of leadership, and this role made him more understandable and more human.

In the Legislative Assembly too he seemed more relaxed in his dominant role. Better prepared, with more information at his ready recall, he was able to toy with the opposition, his jibes eliciting hearty laughter from his admiring backbenchers. He abandoned the former practice of the Premier occupying the seat to the right of the Speaker and began the custom of the Premier's desk being in the centre of the front row. Given his towering height, this central position subtly reinforced his dominance.

Yet a solution to the provincial railways question still eluded him. The government had taken over the ED & BC, but with no prospects of sale Brownlee reluctantly agreed that the province itself should operate the line. This decision was eased by the hiring of John Callaghan, one of the few successful railway contractors in Alberta, who agreed to come out of retirement because of his love for the Peace River country. Brownlee appointed him superintendent of railways, and along with Vernor Smith the three set out to inspect the line. An avid traveler, Brownlee enjoyed the trip immensely, putting along the line in a Packard touring car specially fitted for travel on railway tracks. Callaghan pointed out deficiencies and potentials, and Brownlee returned convinced that with sound management the railway could be turned into a profitable operation, which would make it far more saleable.[18]

The success of the railway was unexpectedly bolstered by a local hero of the Peace River country: Herman Trelle, who won first prize for samples of wheat and oats at the Chicago Exhibition in the fall of 1926. The fact that he had grown his grain 600 miles north of the United States, in the northernmost grain-growing area in the world, created an enormous amount of publicity that rekindled interest in northern Alberta and sparked a period of growth and prosperity. With increased traffic into the north and renewed optimism, the government's decision to operate the railway, and its timing, looked like strokes of genius.

Of course the ED & BC was only a branch line, and a working agreement had to be reached with one of the transcontinental systems. The CPR had operated the line in the past, but Brownlee awarded the new contract to the CNR. This proved to be an astute move. As the traffic on the line increased in the late 1920s, the CPR knew how much it was losing by no longer having the line in its system. For its part, the CNR, now handling the traffic coming off the line, knew exactly what it stood to gain by acquiring the line. The stage was set for resolving Alberta's long-standing railway question in a way that not even the most optimistic had predicted a year earlier.

Another problem that always concerned Brownlee was the financial viability of western Canadian farms. Again Brownlee, as a traditionalist, looked at the balance sheet of agriculture as he would any other business. Some in the UFA waxed eloquent about the moral superiority of life on the family farm, and a few recommended large-scale government involvement or even more radical changes to "the system." These people did not have Brownlee's sympathy. He saw occasional unfairness, but believed that agricultural problems could be solved in the same way as any other business problem: increased efficiency, competent management, and, of course, hard work—all within the existing political, legal, and economic framework.

Brownlee's experience as a central figure in the development of farmer-owned and operated businesses, well before his career in politics, allowed him to argue strongly and successfully against the wilder notions such as provincewide debt moratoriums, government-guaranteed prices for farm commodities, and the insistent demands for a provincially owned and operated bank. Instead, he always advocated "sound business principles."[19]

Brownlee could see that the basic problem facing western Canadian agriculture was that in normal times the food-growing capacity in the world was surplus to the demand. In short, most times the world did not need western Canada's bountiful harvests. This reality explained the typically low and volatile prices for agricultural commodities, especially grains. The pools somewhat ameliorated this situation by providing volume enough to generate some market clout and by providing producers with an annually averaged price to lessen the risks and vulnerabilities associated with selling into a usually over-supplied market.

After pools were created in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the three pools created the Central Selling Agency (popularly known as the Canadian Wheat Pool) to manage the overseas marketing and sales of pool grains. By 1927 the once utopian-sounding idea of Canadian producer cooperatives directly supplying British consumer cooperatives was very close to reality. Brownlee, though, believed that success would come from business efficiencies rather than any worldwide camaraderie of cooperators.

So it was that Brownlee and A.J. McPhail, president of the board of the Central Selling Agency, traveled to Europe in the summer of 1927 to get to know principal figures in the British and continental grain trade. The hope was to secure contracts to supply large quantities of pool grain, but little came of their intense activities. British millers were reluctant to tie themselves to overseas suppliers, and France and Germany both shuddered at the suggestion of large quantities of Canadian grain coming on the market and instead moved toward protectionism. However, at the time it appeared that it might be possible to secure some overseas contracts for the farmer-owned pools, thus cutting out the traditional private grain traders.[20]

In November of 1927, Brownlee represented Alberta at the much-heralded Dominion-Provincial Conference called by Prime Minister King to discuss Senate and constitutional reform. Like many other such conferences over the years, by the time the Premiers gathered economic matters seemed much more pressing. In retrospect, Brownlee's comments at the Conference were by far the most perceptive. He pointed out emphatically that there was growing public demand for education, health and welfare, and other services that were provincial responsibilities, while provincial revenues were limited and largely fixed. Given his interest in the balance sheet and his in-built caution, he worried that the provinces would not be able to cope if there was unexpected economic adversity. Brownlee pointed out that grain prices were down from their 1926 highs and that farm incomes were stable only because of increased yields. He knew better than anyone at the Conference that basing economic prosperity on high yields, given the world wheat surplus, was a risky proposition. Urban unemployment, Brownlee continued, was another sign of economic sluggishness. Every western city was facing demands for unemployment relief, growing to serious proportions in winter. Ottawa's continuing recruitment of immigrants was contributing to that rising unemployment, he contended. He argued that immigration should be curtailed to allow for economic consolidation. If western farmers and western governments were allowed to consolidate their economic position, and if federal policies were aimed at assisting in this direction, a degree of prosperity would arise that would attract immigrants without Ottawa's existing sales campaigns. Brownlee's analysis had no impact on federal immigration policies. Prime Minister King viewed worries about the country's economy as devious plots to pry funds away from the federal treasury.[21]

Over the next two years, the seeds that Brownlee had planted in his early months as Premier began to reach fruition. The provincial railways were sold to an equal partnership of the CPR and the CNR for the incredibly high price of $25 million. The deal relieved the province of $9.5 million in bonded debt, provided three instalments of $5 million payable every five years starting in June 1929, and, most noted by Brownlee, lifted a burden of over $1 million in annual interest charges from the province.[22] What accounted for the remarkable success? Yes, there was a rising sense of optimism in business. Yes, the huge yields in the 1928 crop promised strong traffic on the rail lines, but even critics conceded that Brownlee had been crucial to the agreement. His ability to deal with heads of government and business as an equal, his skill as a negotiator (he had turned down an earlier offer), and his keen business sense all seemed confirmed by the deal. It was an enormous boost to his prestige.

His reputation would soon soar even higher, although the victories were hard won. Brownlee performed as a shrewd and prudent manager in gradually bringing the province's balance sheet into a healthier position. In 1929 the Alberta government achieved a surplus of over $1.5 million. To Brownlee, a reserve would be a useful cushion given the number of potential setbacks that might happen, but news of the surplus prompted cries for funding from such diverse groups as those advocating sweeping educational reform to those demanding more assistance to indebted farmers. When Brownlee urged caution on both counts, he drew sharp criticism. He consoled himself by his conviction that he was correct and that his course was in everyone's best interest regardless of what they might think of him in the short term.

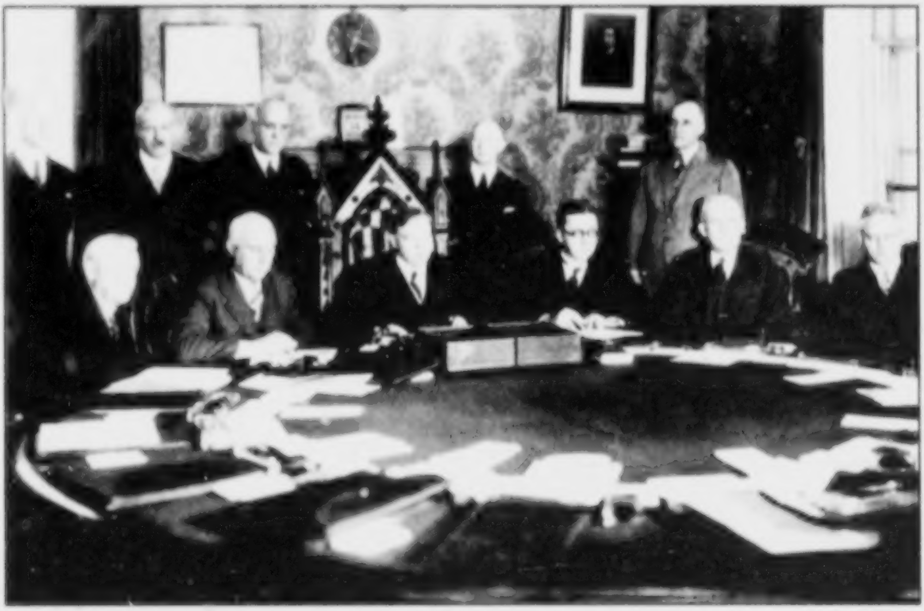
Brownlee would overcome even his naysayers with his handling of the conclusion of the negotiations over the transfer of control of Crown land and resources from Ottawa to Alberta. The issue was not simply handing over control; there was general acceptance that there should be compensation to the three prairie provinces for the loss of what should have been their assets. Most people understood that the granting of millions of acres of lands to "homesteaders" was intended to serve national purposes, but what about the lands given to the Hudson's Bay Company and to various railway companies over the years? Even imperturbable John Brownlee was outraged that 6.4 million acres of some of the finest and most fertile land in Alberta had been granted to various eastern corporations to subsidize construction of railways, not in Alberta, but in British Columbia, Manitoba, and even in Ontario.

As well, several Indian reserves, large military reserves, forest reserves, mining reserves, and, at the time, fully 95% of Canada's national park land had been hived out of Alberta. In addition, there had been a number of sweetheart deals, often to the advantage of assorted political friends of federal politicians, for the exploitation of forest, mining, and hydro-electric resources within these alienated lands, even including park land. Federal policies had also permitted huge wastage of resources such as the billions of cubic feet of natural gas that had been burned off as waste during the attempts to develop the Turner Valley oil field.

As the negotiations proceeded, the idea was adopted of compensating these losses with an ongoing annual payment by the federal government to each of the three affected provinces. The federal proposal was to set these payments according to the then-existing population. Thus, Alberta would receive $526,000 annually and Saskatchewan $750,000. Brownlee argued that this was unfair since Alberta had larger mineral reserves, had had more lands and resources alienated, and might well one day have a larger population and economy than Saskatchewan. He proposed a sliding scale tied to the population as it changed into the future.

Essentially Brownlee's position was that Alberta should receive terms at least as favourable as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, which were also attempting to negotiate their own settlement of the issue. Meeting in Ottawa with Prime Minister King in early December 1929, Brownlee pointed to the recent recommendation of a federal commission that Manitoba, in addition to the ongoing payments, should also receive an immediate cash payment. Brownlee asked for a similar one-time payment to Alberta. King became frustrated and upset with the course of the negotiations and abruptly got up and left the room. Not to be outdone, Brownlee got up and left as well, leaving the remaining officials to try and decide where to go from there.[illegible] Cooler heads prevailed, and King was soon persuaded of the political advantage of coming to an immediate agreement with Manitoba and Alberta in order to isolate the obnoxious (and non-Liberal) Premier Anderson from Saskatchewan.

King proposed to Brownlee that they immediately sign the agreement and leave the matter of an additional cash payment to be studied by yet another commission. Brownlee agreed, but raised concerns about federal plans for large-scale, private development of resources within the national parks, then being championed by former Alberta Premier and current Liberal Cabinet minister, Charles Stewart. Still helping Alberta Liberals, Stewart had become Brownlee's nemesis, constantly doing whatever he could to scuttle Brownlee's initiatives. King sided with Brownlee on this occasion, commenting in his diary: "Brownlee strikes me as knowing his subject and his province, and as such being superior to Mr. Stewart, who is handicapped in his dislike of B[rownlee]."[illegible] The agreements were speedily prepared, and on December 14, 1929, amidst the glare of a photographer's flood lamps, the historic documents were signed. They provided that as of October 1, 1930, Alberta would have control of its lands and natural resources.



PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (A-10,924)

Premier Brownlee (at the table, centre right, wearing dark framed glasses) poses with Prime Minister King (centre) on December 14, 1929, at the time of the signing of the agreements that would finally bring to Alberta control over its Crown lands and resources. This historic step laid the groundwork for all the future prosperity and strength of Alberta.

The main thrust of the natural resources agreements was to finally place the three prairie provinces in the same constitutional position as the other provinces of Confederation by having ownership of all Crown lands and resources, and being able to derive royalties from them and administer them in the provincial interest. Bringing the prairie provinces to a position of equality with the others was an obvious and important step in completing Confederation.

It was a great triumph for Brownlee. The prairie West's inferior constitutional status had fuelled regional alienation. Every Alberta administration had grappled with the question, and Brownlee himself had worked on it for almost a decade. Now he had succeeded both in obtaining control and securing such additional benefits that everyone in Alberta hailed the agreement. Future generations would benefit far more than they would realize because Brownlee also drafted the legislation that implemented the agreement, legislation that the federal government would attack 50 years later as part of the so-called National Energy Program. It is a testament to Brownlee's competence that, even after half a century, the best lawyers that federal tax dollars could buy were not able to find a loophole in his legislation protecting the exclusive right of Alberta to tax its own natural resources.

In 1929 the psychological effect of seeming to be recognized as an equal and coming into possession of an immense inheritance produced a spurt of celebration and optimism about the future. The resources seemed enormous: 89 million acres of land, the world's largest coal reserves, enormous hydroelectric potential, sweeping forests, any number of precious metals, and, still not completely realized, what would eventually be determined as one of the world's largest supplies of oil and natural gas. There was cause for celebration.

And celebration there was. A crowd of more than 3,000 gathered in below zero temperatures and a biting north wind to welcome Brownlee back to Edmonton at the CPR station. As he alighted, the Edmonton Newsboys' Band struck up a rousing arrangement of "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here." Striding to the top of a makeshift platform, Brownlee accepted the welcomes of the mayor and the president of the chamber of commerce. When he stepped forward to speak, a voice in the crowd yelled, "Three cheers and a Tiger for the Premier."[25] He spoke briefly, telling them a new era was opening for Alberta, the prosperity of which would depend on the inspiration they could obtain from possession of such untold resources. It "means a lot to Alberta to have control of her oil resources at their present stage of development,"[26] he concluded with incredible prescience, to another burst of cheers. John Edward Brownlee was at the peak of his political career.

Central to the Brownlee tragedy was that having worked so hard, for so long, to painfully manoeuvre Alberta into a position of financial soundness, and with so much upside potential now almost about to be realized, the next challenge would be the world's worst depression. Contrary to the way it is told nowadays, people did not wake up one morning in late October 1929 and ruefully shake their heads that they were now in the Great Depression. Brownlee, who enjoyed spending his Sunday mornings reading the Toronto papers, was one of the few Albertans to take serious note of the stock market crashes. He was also well aware of the falling grain prices and the rising urban unemployment. However, when he mentioned these matters to the Prime Minister at their December 1929 meetings, King sharply rebuffed him as another whining Premier trying to get his hands into the federal cookie jar.[27]

By the time the Alberta Legislative Assembly met in February of 1930, the top price for wheat had fallen from $1.78 per bushel the previous summer to below $1.20. European demand for Canadian wheat evaporated as protectionist trade walls were raised and the banking and financial systems began their meltdown. There was concern in the press over Argentina's dumping of grain on the world market, but much more devastating was the massive dumping that was already underway by the Soviet Union. Stalin was busy confiscating grain from his own farmers to sell on the world market for cash to finance his industrialization schemes. Farmers died by the millions from this government-imposed famine in the Ukraine, and Stalin's agenda also helped bring western Canadian agriculture to its knees.

Meanwhile, the western pools, so lately hailed as a solution to the perennial problems of western agriculture, were now in serious jeopardy. The pools had adopted a system of paying farmers an initial payment upon delivery and a later payment based on the average selling price of domestic and export sales by the Central Selling Agency. The initial payment for the 1929–30 crop year had been set at $1 per bushel for the best grade. In order to make this payment, the pools borrowed from the banks, which accepted the grain in store as collateral against the loans on condition that the selling price remain 15% above the initial payment.[28] That margin was now in serious peril, and the banks made it clear they would call in their loans if the margin was breached. This action would mean the bankruptcy of the pools, their collapse as a business, and a crushing body blow to the notion of farmer and western Canadian self-reliance.

Hasty meetings were called, and Brownlee, along with Premiers Bracken and Anderson, met with pool officials in Regina and then bank representatives in Winnipeg. Each province eventually agreed to guarantee loans made to its respective provincial pool. Brownlee assured the Legislative Assembly that "wheat would have to sink to a level never reached on Canadian markets before the provincial governments would suffer any loss."[29] Ever cautious, he also ensured that should any advances be made under the guarantee, they would be considered loans against the assets of the Alberta Wheat Pool.[30]

By March the top price of wheat plummeted through the margin and sank below $1 per bushel. Brownlee understood the situation better than any political leader in Canada. He pleaded for a concerted effort by all levels of government and business to meet "a situation which may spell disaster to every farmer or business man in the West, a concatenation of world conditions which may eventually drive Canadian producers and exporters alike from certain world markets if the governments of the day stand idly by."[31] He went on to advocate a federal guarantee of 70¢ per bushel, enough to sustain farmers in operation and prevent them from becoming a charge on the provincial government.

With the economy unravelling because of situations far beyond the province's control, Brownlee urged the UFA caucus to support him in calling an immediate election. The members resisted. They still retained their naïve dreams of fair play in politics. An early election, motivated only by political advantage, was distasteful to them. Some suggested waiting until 1931. The earliest date they would agree to was June 19, 1930.[32]

Brownlee dominated the campaign in every way. Critics and supporters alike no longer referred to the UFA but instead to "the Brownlee government." Even Brownlee himself asked that the voters "not fail me." He delivered 67 speeches in 38 constituencies and made two major radio addresses. His message was essentially a calm, analytical review of the record and a request for a mandate to administer the newly acquired natural resources. As for the opposition parties, Brownlee advanced an argument characteristic of Alberta's entire political history:

> You hear from one end of the province to the other the opinion that the government will be returned, and the peculiar argument is advanced that this province needs a strong opposition. Now an opposition is a thing that is no more needed in the public business of this province … than in the management of the affairs of any of our large corporations. The CPR or the Bank of Montreal handling assets nearly as large as the assets of the province and dealing in sums of money much greater do not believe that their board of directors should be divided into government and opposition. The directors sit around a council chamber without any division and face the problems of their great corporation in the interest of the corporation itself. After all, governments today are nothing but big businesses … but there is a difference: big business deals in dollars and cents and physical properties; the government deals with these *and with the welfare of the people of the province.*[33]

The UFA lost three seats to finish with 40. The Liberals ended with nine seats, the Conservatives six, Labour four, and the independents four. For those such as Brownlee who examined the returns more closely there was cause for concern. The customary large majorities for UFA candidates were down sharply, and three of the independents had won rural seats. Brownlee told his caucus in no uncertain terms that had they waited another few months they would have been beaten.[14] Nevertheless, they had won, and it was clear to everyone that Brownlee's leadership and hard work, both before and during the campaign, had been the major reason for that victory.

There was little time or cause for celebration. Farm commodity prices continued to decline. The top price for wheat was now under $1 per bushel, but the pools were committed to buying it from farmers at that price until the end of the crop year on July 31. The banks now took the position that they would only advance the pools funds on the security of warehouse receipts. Effectively this meant the pools could only access their line of credit if they continued to buy grain at a loss. Again the provinces were called upon to back the pools on the argument that their losses, estimated at $25 million, could be covered by the eventual sale of the huge backlog of grain from the 1929 crop and even the 1928 crop. Even more perplexing was what to do about the coming 1930–31 crop year. Brownlee realized that the financial predicament of the pools was now well beyond the capacity of the provinces. Only the federal government had the resources to deal with the situation. The pools set a cautious initial price for the new crop year of a maximum of 60¢ per bushel.

After the federal election of July 28, 1930, Brownlee had a new Prime Minister with whom to deal—his one-time employer, R.B. Bennett. They had had occasional encounters over the years, and Bennett had always seemed ready to offer Brownlee advice as his career evolved. Now Brownlee sent off a telegram, which read in part:

> Respectfully urge that Dominion place credit of Canada behind this industry by announcing reasonable minimum price to growers, with or without the establishment [of a] wheat board to handle crop, until world conditions adjusted. Cannot too strongly urge some action necessary [to] prevent great revulsion [of] public opinion.[15]

Brownlee was deeply disappointed when the reply was a brief lecture pointing out the world price of wheat was the result of a world oversupply of 400 million bushels.[16]

Against this background, the price of wheat continued to spiral downward, soon collapsing through the margin on the initial payment of 60¢ per bushel. There was an exact replay of the previous year with the banks threatening to close down the pools and Brownlee and the other prairie Premiers being called upon to guarantee the credit extended to the pools. The Central Selling Agency was forced to appoint a new general manager, John McFarland, acceptable to the banks and well connected to Prime Minister Bennett. While there was the pretence that McFarland reported to the board of the Central Selling Agency, that was soon obviously not the case.[17] Brownlee and his friends A.J. McPhail and H.W. Wood watched helplessly as the work of a generation of farm leaders crumbled before their eyes. Wood soon resigned as president of the UFA, and McPhail would die within a year, at age 46.

These losses meant the loss of moderate voices. With the ascension of Robert Gardiner to the presidency of the UFA and of Norman Priestley as secretary, the UFA leadership lurched sharply to the left.[39] The new executive was soon advocating socialist policies that had little support among the general membership of the UFA, or from the UFA legislative caucus or, especially, from Brownlee. Rural voters suddenly found themselves searching for legitimate leadership at the same time as they faced the most drastic commodity price collapse in Canadian history.

Brownlee also had to grapple with record levels of unemployment in Calgary and Edmonton. Employers responded to slumping sales by laying off workers at the same time as the sons and daughters of farmers were streaming into the cities in hopes of finding work to supplement the farm income. Brownlee could not resist reminding federal authorities that he had argued for more controlled immigration to guard against an oversupply of labour. The high unemployment meant there was little prospect of an immediate increase in government revenue, and Brownlee therefore took an early, vigorous, and continuing role in reducing expenditures—down to the smallest detail. He refused to accept collect telegrams, cut government advertising, and had the electric lift in the Legislative Building disconnected.[40]

While recognizing the growing severity of the situation, Brownlee was convinced that people were becoming too demanding on government to solve their problems. Often he insisted that government backing of programs be kept secret, or that assistance be rendered on a per case basis, considering the merit of the individuals involved and avoiding any blanket programs. His rejection of government programs as a panacea and his insistence on attempting to balance the budget and maintain the financial soundness of the province led to growing criticism that he was callous to individual human suffering. His response was that if the province were to fail financially, there would be much greater suffering.[41] In 1931 such a warning was still somewhat rhetorical, but in 1932 the situation would become much worse.

In January of 1932 Alberta came within hours of being forced to default on a $3 million bond maturity. The New York markets were no longer buying Canadian securities at any price. Brownlee's frantic telegrams finally moved Bennett to authorize a $15 million sinking fund, which refinanced the debt at a record-high interest rate.[42] For practical purposes, the federal treasury had become a bank of last resort for Alberta.

To Brownlee, being forced to increase debt and interest charges in order to meet drastically curtailed basic expenses was a horrendous situation. He continually pressed the federal government to assume a larger share of the direct relief costs. Bennett moved slowly in this direction, finally paying a larger share of the costly old age pension scheme that had been introduced in 1927. Brownlee did not miss the opportunity to remind people that he had counselled caution with respect to such schemes.[43] In fact, he came to regard the Great Depression as an object lesson to citizens of the importance of maintaining sound financial foundations and as a vindication of his fiscal conservatism.

Meanwhile, the new UFA president, Robert Gardiner, although not mentioning Brownlee by name, bitterly denounced his policy, declaring, "the only remedy for the present evil of under-consumption by those who control the system is to curtail consumption still further by what is erroneously called 'economy.'"[43] The UFA convention, now firmly controlled by radicals, passed resolutions urging nationalization of the monetary system, public ownership of radio broadcasting, hydroelectric power, and even land, across-the-board reductions of debt, and cancellation of all interest payments until the price of farm commodities equalled the cost of production. Brownlee regarded most of these ideas as insane, but he tried to avoid controversy.[44]

Ideas for solving the situation were now pouring in from all quarters: secession of the western provinces, amalgamation of the three prairie provinces, promotion of tourism to Alberta from the United States, building sports stadiums, creating a provincially owned bank, suspending debt payments for the duration of the Depression, and on and on. At first Brownlee responded to these proposals thoughtfully and carefully pointed out their weaknesses. Some of the proposals were outside the province's jurisdiction, but for some people his "lawyer talk" about constitutional difficulties was just an excuse for inaction. He tried to reason with one critic by writing:

> I would like you to candidly face the question of the position of one province attempting to defy the constitution by itself… . Immediately our action would be tested in the courts of Canada and be declared *ultra vires*. The only course then would be open defiance of the courts and the mobilization of our manpower to defend our action. Do you think for one moment that the balance of Canada would sit idly by and allow such action to go unchallenged?[45]

Eventually Brownlee became impatient with irresponsible, half-baked schemes. He told one amateur theorist that if the results would not be so tragic he would like to see the proposal implemented just so Canadians could learn from actual experience how utterly it would fail.[46]

As the Depression continued to worsen, most Albertans gave up on the patient, cautious, traditional course being pursued by Brownlee and shifted their allegiance to promises of faster, easier solutions. By far the most popular of these panaceas was known as Social Credit. The central ideas that made up Social Credit were not new to dedicated UFA members. The works of Major C.H. Douglas, the movement's founder, had been circulated and discussed by UFA locals a decade earlier. The notion of eliminating bank-created debt by a system of credits based on publicly owned resources had contributed to calls for a provincial bank and other inflationary policies to address the sharp, severe depression of 1919–23. The re-emergence of Social Credit as a solution to the new depression was largely the work of a popular radio evangelist and respected Calgary high school principal, William Aberhart, who was converted to the Social Credit gospel in 1932.

Aberhart simplified Major Douglas's ideas, mixed in some indigenous Alberta reform ideas, and incorporated the admixture into his widely popular evangelical radio ministry. Proclaiming that Social Credit was "Christianity in Action," Aberhart called for the state to provide a $25 per month dividend to each adult. This would make up for the lack of purchasing power that, according to Social Credit thinking, had caused the Depression. Brownlee had contended with Social Credit advocates for years and continued to insist that, whatever the theory's merits, its implementation was beyond the constitutional capability of a province. For him, that ended the discussion, but for a growing number of Albertans constitutional concerns evaporated before the stark necessity of doing something. If Social Credit was the answer, it must be implemented regardless of constitutional niceties.

To Brownlee, such a prospect was nonsense, but to Albertans suffering from hunger and malnutrition while granaries overflowed, Social Credit became more and more appealing. Aberhart proclaimed that Social Credit was the answer and that it could be applied, if necessary, in Alberta alone. The walls of Jericho, Aberhart trumpeted, had not been breached by constitutional amendments or economic retrenchment, but by faith in God and the implementation of His will.

As Aberhart was introducing Social Credit into his weekly radio sermons, a meeting in Calgary in 1932 began the formation of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). The CCF Manifesto, proclaimed in the following year, called for the nationalization of banks and reform of credit institutions, but it went much further and incorporated the ideas of European socialism and organized labour. While the new UFA leaders such as Norman Priestley were active in the formation of the CCF, H.W. Wood remained the more authentic voice of the Alberta farmers when he declared that "the farmers' movement [has been] turned back forty years by [this] UFA-Labour combination."[47] The results in the 1935 election, and in many subsequent elections, would show that some 90% of UFA members would transfer their allegiance not to the CCF but to Social Credit.

The Great Depression was threatening the re-election prospects of every government in Canada, and W.L. Mackenzie King was suitably buoyed by his prospects of winning the next federal election. He did not take this victory for granted, however, and began working hard behind the scenes. He sent an emissary, Norman Lambert, to Brownlee to seek cooperation in uniting all those who opposed the Conservative regime of R.B. Bennett. Brownlee was not interested and expressed some bitterness at the harsh partisanship of the Alberta Liberals. When Lambert met with the local Liberal leadership, he could not help but agree with Brownlee. As he recorded in his personal diary:

> Met Chas. Stewart, McLaughlin & Howson in pm and discussed possibility of union but strong antipathy expressed to J.E.B. [Brownlee]. Met [another] group at night … very militant and stupid with one or two exceptions… . Feeling strong vs. any relations with Brownlee, UFA, or anybody else.[48]

It was evident that the provincial Liberals sensed the new vulnerability of the Brownlee government and were not to be distracted by talk of union or cooperation. As Lambert noted, there was particular hostility to Brownlee, who, more than any other factor, was responsible for the Liberals' frustratingly lengthy sojourn in the political wilderness. In October 1932 they chose one of their most militant members, W.R. Howson, as the new provincial leader. Howson was to pursue an aggressive style, focusing particularly on potential scandals in an effort to hasten the demise of the Brownlee government. His attacks were aided by two of his closest friends, Peter Campbell, publisher of the *Edmonton*

Bulletin, and Neil MacLean, prominent courtroom lawyer and a member of the same law firm as Howson.

The several investigations and rumour campaigns Howson initiated had their effect, primarily because the loyalty of the UFA supporters was being seriously eroded. After more than a decade in power, UFA Cabinet ministers led an increasingly urban lifestyle. It was alleged that Brownlee and his ministers were not suffering any financial hardships, even though Brownlee had ordered a 10% salary reduction. Like others on continuing salaries, he could now afford a maid, a new car, and wore fine clothes, while farmers patched their rags and worried about how they were going to feed their children.

Another illustration of the estrangement between the government and the less fortunate came with the so-called hunger march of December 1932. Brownlee was convinced by police reports and his own suspicions that the organizers of the march were primarily radical communists pursuing their own political agenda.[49] He announced that he would be prepared to meet with a small delegation at any time, but he saw to it that permission for the march was not granted. The organizers went ahead, and a mass meeting ensued at the Edmonton market square, which attracted perhaps as many as 1,000. When, on cue, they attempted to march to the Legislative Building, they were met by mounted police and were easily dispersed.

Brownlee was certain he had made the sensible decision, later stating: "The government would simply not permit this gathering with the danger of violence, which is always present if you get a large number of people led by irresponsible men."[50] Unfortunately for Brownlee, there was the irony that on the day of the march, December 20, 1932, the price of Number 1 wheat fell below 40¢ per bushel, the lowest price for wheat in over 400 years. In drafting his traditional New Year's Day message, he wrote: "The people of our western provinces are facing the future with undiminished courage." In his delivered speech, he crossed out the word "undiminished."[51]

While Brownlee was seen in Alberta as a staid, increasingly out-of-touch fiscal conservative, outside the West he was viewed as a leader of radical, unorthodox reformers. This perception was underlined by his outspoken position on a number of issues at the Dominion-Provincial Conference that convened in January 1933. Some eastern leaders were touting a "back to the farm" movement as a cure for urban unemployment. Brownlee coolly pointed out that new settlers could hardly be expected to succeed when present farmers were experiencing such difficulty. He advocated instead a system of unemployment insurance. He made a controversial call to deliver as much as 10% of relief payments in cash instead of in kind as was the practice. He called for Canadians holding provincial bonds in United States dollars to be denied the foreign exchange bonus. Even more controversial, he advocated a number of banking reforms, including a federally imposed ceiling on interest rates and the creation of a federal agency modeled on his own Debt Adjustment Bureau to mediate disputes between lenders and creditors.[52]

Brownlee also returned to a theme he had raised in earlier years, that while provincial sources of revenue were severely restricted, the services they were expected to provide were rapidly expanding. He stated strongly that the current division of jurisdictions was out of date and needed to be reframed. By the time the Conference adjourned, Brownlee had impressed everyone as the strongest voice from the West, and as Prime Minister Bennett confided to friends, the "ablest mind" in attendance.[33]

Despite that compliment, by March 1933 Bennett was threatening to require the western provinces to accept a federally appointed "financial controller" to manage each province's finances as a condition of the provinces' receiving any more federal funds.[34] Brownlee protested bitterly, but the reality was that Alberta was now absolutely dependent on Ottawa for loans with which to meet its financial obligations.

Bennett showed his regard for Brownlee by appointing him to the Royal Commission on Banking and Currency, which was empanelled in July of 1933. The Commission was to respond to growing sentiment that the federal government should be playing a far more direct role in economic and monetary management. Great Britain had the Bank of England, and the United States had the Federal Reserve Board, but at the time Canadian banking was an entirely private-sector activity. Given the growing popularity of other, far more radical schemes, astute observers predicted that the Commission would recommend the creation of a central bank of Canada. The mode of operation of such a bank and whether it would be privately or government owned were, however, still very much undecided.

The Commission chair and one other member were British Lords, and of the three Canadians appointed Brownlee was clearly the only representative of reform ideas. In the Commission's hearings, held across Canada, he took an active part, frequently questioning witnesses in detail to clearly bring out their ideas. His guiding questions revealed his advocacy for western Canada. He led inarticulate witnesses through their testimony and in so doing brought out themes that demolished some of the arguments put forward by eastern elites, including the notion that western farmers were the authors of their own predicament through poor management, and that the problems of the Depression stemmed from poor land and adverse climate. The facts brought forward revealed that by 1933 only a small minority of Albertans had suffered severe drought, while a very large majority suffered acutely because of record-low prices for all their agricultural commodities. Future commentators would forget this important point, and the Depression would come to be characterized as synonymous with drought. In so doing these commentators fail to understand what drove so many Albertans to advocate financial and monetary reform as the proper antidote to their economic malaise.[35]

The official brief of the government of Alberta, prepared by Brownlee but presented to the Commission by Acting Premier George Hoadley, pointed out five problem areas in need of reform: high interest rates, lack of agricultural credit, the need for a central bank, the need to control foreign exchange rates, and the failure of the banks to pursue a policy of equality between East and West and between agriculture and business.[36] Partly in response to this brief, the Commission recommended in favour of a central bank and proposed that "an inquiry be instituted … to investigate the existing organizations for the provision of rural credit with a view to the preparation of a scheme for the consideration of Parliament."[37]

In a separate memorandum to the Commission report, Brownlee criticized the fact that bank loans to provincial governments, municipalities, and school boards were routinely .25% to .5% higher in the West than for similar loans in the East.[38] He was the only commissioner to recommend a statutory maximum on interest rates and to call for a closer examination of bank profits and interlocking directorates. His most important recommendation was that a Canadian central bank be owned by the government of Canada and that the government should appoint the bank's board and executive officers.[59] The Bank of Canada that was subsequently created had at first a mixture of government and private ownership and control, but in only a few years the Bank was reorganized along the lines Brownlee had recommended.

The "Brownlee Scandal"

The fact that Brownlee was the only Canadian commissioner to recommend in favour of a central bank, and the only commissioner to recommend its eventual character and structure, might well have earned for him at least a footnote in Canadian history. However, this and all his other achievements, major and minor, were about to be lastingly obliterated from the public mind. While Brownlee was drafting his banking report, on September 22, 1933, Neil MacLean filed a statement of claim in the Supreme Court of Alberta before Mr. Justice Boyle (a former Liberal leader) on behalf of A.D. MacMillan and his daughter Vivian. John Brownlee's reputation and, as it would turn out, his place in history would soon be on trial.

The statement of claim alleged that Brownlee had arranged for Vivian MacMillan to move from Edson to Edmonton, had promised to act as her guardian, had acted to secure employment for her with the provincial government, had seduced her in October of 1930 when she was 18 years of age, and had had ongoing sexual relations with her over the next three years. In compensation for unspecified damages, Vivian and her father sought judgment in the amount of $10,000 and $5,000 respectively.[60] Brownlee's response was that "there is not a word of truth in the allegations against me, and I will defend the action to the limit and hope to show before I am through the real cause behind it."[61]

All winter the rumours flew. Those who did not know Brownlee were most inclined to believe the accusations. Those who knew him well found it impossible to accept that the gentlemanly, dour, hard-working John Brownlee could have been living the double life of which he was accused. Brownlee was torn between resigning to save his family and colleagues from further embarrassment and his determination to fight on to save his reputation and continue to guide Alberta during these perilous times. One of Brownlee's confidants, Richard Reid, spent hours talking with Brownlee whom he would find "in the depths of despair."[62]

There was no relief from the despair of the Depression either. The 1935 UFA convention, recapturing some of its old energy, was bombarded with resolutions demanding the government adopt Social Credit as a panacea for the problems of the day. William Aberhart himself addressed the delegates. Brownlee attended as well and despite his politically wounded condition used all his remaining influence to speak against any adoption of the "unworkable" Social Credit ideas. The convention ultimately did reject Social Credit, but many remained as unconvinced as the heckler who asked: "What have we got to lose?"[63]

As for the lawsuit against Brownlee, his legal team had initiated an investigation to support a counter suit alleging "a conspiracy." The investigation revealed key Liberals all over the case. The MacMillans' lawyer, Neil MacLean, allegedly had a personal vendetta against Brownlee dating back to Brownlee's term as Attorney General when he had supposedly refused to waive a charge of drunk driving against MacLean.[64] MacLean had represented the plaintiff in a previous scandal case involving Cabinet minister O.L. McPherson. There was even a claim by a Mrs. Schwantze that Neil MacLean had offered her money to seduce Brownlee.[65] Digging up scandals was Liberal leader Howson's style, and supposedly he had been a party to a plot to trail Brownlee and Vivian MacMillan when they went on a drive together. Vivian MacMillan and her boyfriend, John Caldwell, were thought to be motivated by the prospect of a financial windfall from the settlement. As well, it was clear that the Liberals involved had done all they could to adjust the timing of the case so that it would cause the maximum political damage to Brownlee.

Finally, after being twice delayed, his trial began in the last week of June 1934. It drew attention from across Canada, and even British and American newspapers sent reporters. When Vivian MacMillan herself took the stand, and hour after hour described in detail various alleged sexual episodes, the Liberal *Edmonton Bulletin* twice took contempt of court charges in order to publish in explicit detail all of her allegations.[66] Less fulsome coverage was given to A.L. Smith, who conducted Brownlee's defence. He questioned the likelihood of a cautious, legally trained Brownlee ever promising to be MacMillan's "guardian" with all the legal implications associated with that word. In numerous cases where MacMillan had claimed that Brownlee and she were having sexual intercourse at a particular day and time, Smith was able to use Brownlee's official appointment book to show that he had been out of town or even, on one occasion, in Winnipeg meeting with Premier Bracken.[67]

When Brownlee was called to the stand, the same line of defence continued. Brownlee provided counter testimony to numerous claims by MacMillan, but in the public mind the case had become a simple one of whether or not there had been a sexual affair. Smith's final question was, "Did you, on your solemn oath, at any time have sexual intercourse with Vivian MacMillan?" Brownlee's answer was, "I did not."[68]

As the trial came to an end, Smith withdrew the counter claim, stating it had become obvious that there was a simple question of seduction or no seduction. After four hours and forty minutes of deliberation, the jury returned its verdict, finding in favour of Vivian MacMillan and awarding her and her father their requested damages. Instantly the courtroom was alive with controversy. Had the jury found correctly? Justice Ives immediately declared he did not agree with the jury's answers, although his argument was actually that no damages had been proven.[69]

As usual, Brownlee was one of the coolest heads. He recognized that the jury's verdict, whatever the result of any ongoing appeals, had ended his political career. He immediately announced that he would resign as soon as a successor could be chosen. Four years earlier there had been predictions he could be Premier for another 20 years or move on to the federal arena. His solid achievements, including the transfer of the control of the natural resources, should have guaranteed him a prominent place in the memory of Albertans forever. Yet within months he was largely forgotten, except for his role in the so-called "Brownlee Scandal."

On July 10, 1934, John Edward Brownlee resigned as Premier of Alberta, and Richard Reid assumed his place. However, Brownlee's contribution to the UFA, to Alberta, and to the West was not over. He continued to sit as an MLA, and during the election campaign of 1935 he was, even then, the most articulate voice the UFA could muster. He delivered two radio addresses explaining why Social Credit could never work. He weathered bitter opposition during his own re-election bid in the constituency of Ponoka. On one occasion, Social Credit advocates hammered on the walls of the hall in which he was speaking with logs and sent up a cascade of automobile horn-blowing, all designed to drown out his voice of reasoned analysis.[30]

The Alberta Liberals, jubilant after their destruction of Brownlee, believed the way clear for their rightful return to power. When Social Credit, rejected by the UFA, began to transform its provincial Bible study groups into political constituency associations, the Liberals took notice and belatedly promised that when elected they would implement Social Credit policies. When the Social Credit movement exploded and won 56 of 63 seats in the 1935 Alberta election, no one was more surprised or frustrated than the Liberal inner cadre. They immediately aimed their malevolent tactics at the new Social Credit Premier, William Aberhart.

Life After Politics

Brownlee returned to the practice of law, founding the firm in Edmonton that later became known as Brownlee Fryett, a firm that benefited from the municipal and institutional contacts that Brownlee had secured because of his reputation for competence. Brownlee even contributed, secretly, to the drafting of sections of *The Case for Alberta*, the Alberta government's submission to the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission in 1937, which recommended changes to dominion-provincial relations in the post-Depression era. Brownlee's sections detailed how the federal government had failed to respond adequately and appropriately to the Depression, and pointed out how the provinces' growing responsibilities had not been offset by any enlargement of their revenue powers—points he had made 10 years earlier, had anyone listened.[31] The fact that Brownlee would assist the Aberhart government anonymously, after all he had gone through, showed the depth of his commitment to the West and Alberta.

Ultimately, Brownlee returned to the company he had helped found 30 years before, the United Grain Growers Ltd. He began again as solicitor, helping them successfully navigate through the complex issue of the taxing of cooperatives. He was also instrumental in working through recapitalizing the company to begin a massive expansion and modernization program that would see the UGG emerge into the 1950s as the pre-eminent farmer-owned grain business in the world.

His obvious value to the company was acknowledged by his being named general manager in 1947 and president on May 1, 1948. He served in these capacities for the next 13 years. Still committed to "sound business principles," he began the trend to phase out small, inefficient elevators and invest heavily in larger-volume delivery points. He led the way as the UGG diversified its business. His experience as one of the world's most knowledgeable "grain men" was illustrated by his being invited to serve on a number of national and international committees, still studying the issues of grain marketing and the economic viability of farming.

He maintained offices in both Winnipeg and Calgary and travelled extensively to remain in touch with his "UGG family." His schedule was never busier than in the 1956–57 crop year when he was the central figure as the UGG celebrated 50 years in business.[7] Throughout the year there was a steady stream of dinners, receptions, and events; all expecting a visit from the president and a few remarks about the company's past and future. It was a schedule reminiscent of an election campaign, and something of Brownlee's political experience was evident in his ability to approach an agent from even the remotest point and call him and his family by name.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NB-16-230A)

John Brownlee (c. 1953), as president of the United Grain Growers Ltd., prepares for a radio address on farming issues. Some 40 years of central involvement in agri-business qualified him as one of the world's leading "grain men."

Committed as he always had been to hard work as a valid form of spiritual development, he kept his growing health problems private and continued his pace. There were a few last honours: induction into the "Order of the Buffalo Hunt" in Manitoba; being named by Prime Minister Diefenbaker to the National Productivity Council; and belated approval to hang his portrait in the Alberta Legislature.

Reluctantly he submitted his resignation as president of the UGG, and only two weeks later, on July 15, 1961, he died in Calgary. "Brownlee of Alberta," Prime Minister King had called him. It was a deserved and fitting epitaph, but, sadly, one he was not awarded. Albertans revel in the prosperity of their resources and vigilantly guard their provincial jurisdiction, but few know or care that the foundation for that prosperity and jurisdiction was provided by one clearly competent Premier—John E. Brownlee.

Notes

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66. *Edmonton Bulletin*, June 26, 1934.
67. GA, "Transcript of Evidence and Proceedings in the Matter of MacMillan and MacMillan versus Brownlee" contained in "Appeal to the Privy Council of the Case of Hon. J.E. Brownlee versus Vivian MacMillan," July 1, 1937, pp. 170 ff.
68. Ibid., p. 200.
69. W.F. Bowker, interviewed by author, August 3, 1979.

70. John A. Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 316.

71. Mr. Justice M.M. Porter, interviewed by author, February 20, 1979.

72. The 50 years derived from the founding of the Grain Growers' Grain Company in 1906.

Richard Reid

1934-1935

BRADFORD J. RENNIE

Richard Reid, 1934–1935

Introduction

Primly seated on the cheap, vinyl-upholstered bench of the bus, the aging librarian of Canadian Utilities, tight-lipped and neatly dressed in an austere suit, is on his way to work. No one knows or cares who he is; he is anonymous and unknown—an ordinary face among a thousand others. Yet for a fleeting moment, three decades earlier, he had been the most powerful man in Alberta.[1]

Richard Gavin Reid was Premier of Alberta from July 10, 1934, to September 3, 1935. Although he was the shortest-serving Premier in Alberta history, his government was competent and not without accomplishment. But it was sideswiped by economic and political forces beyond its control, and the hapless Reid presided over the most cataclysmic political event in the province's history: the annihilation of his own party and the inauguration of a 36-year dynasty, which began with Alberta's most radical political experiment.

Early Life

Richard Reid was born near Glasgow, Scotland, on January 17, 1879, to George Reid and Margaret Ogston.[2] After passing through the public schools and the Hutchinson's Grammar School in Glasgow, the young Reid toiled for several years in the wholesale provision business. Adventurous and patriotic, from 1900 to 1902 he served with distinction in the South African War as a sergeant in the Royal Army Medical Corps, doing hospital work. At war's end, he briefly returned to Scotland, thinking of going back to South Africa, but like hundreds of thousands of restless Britons he decided to try his luck in Canada. Arriving in the Killarney district of southern Manitoba in 1903, he laboured as a farm hand until harvest time, and in the following winter he swung an ax for a lumber company near Fort William, Ontario. A frugal Scot (are there any other kinds?), Reid emerged in the spring with $160 in his pocket and was "full of faith."[3]

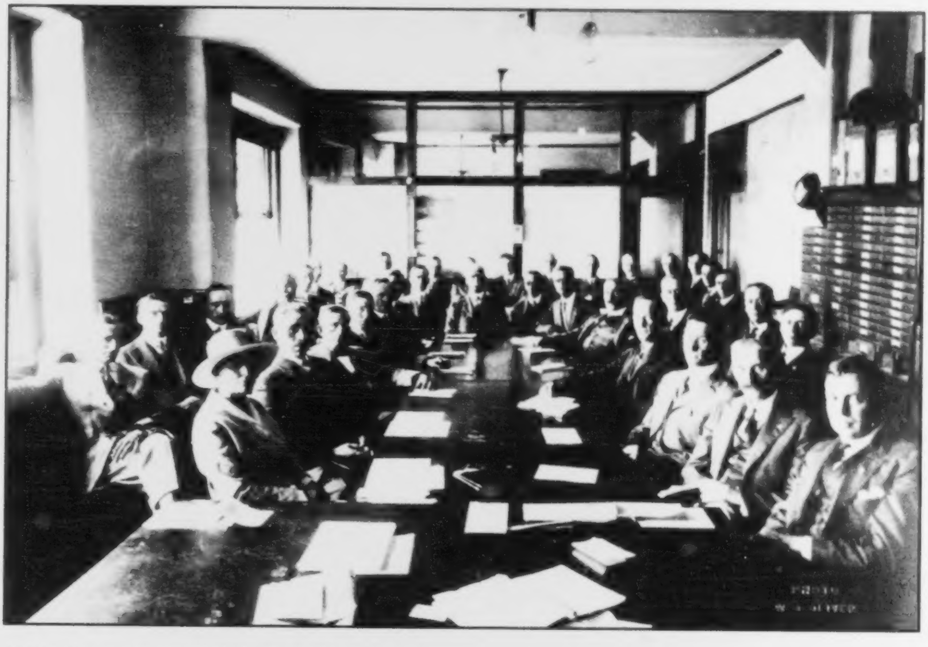
This optimism drew him to the frontier of east-central Alberta, near Manville, where he homesteaded in 1904. The plucky pioneer's medical experience in South Africa proved a godsend; with a pair of forceps he extracted bad teeth, to the undying gratitude of neighbours suffering the agonies of toothache. Three decades later, an *Edmonton Journal* headline would proclaim, "Premier-Elect Once Pulled Molars."[4]

Reid's abilities went far beyond crude dentistry; he was soon active in local office. He was on the municipal council of Buffalo Coulee for four years and was reeve for two. He was instrumental in forming the Vermilion municipal hospital district, the first of its kind in Alberta, and served on its board for many years. In 1919 he married a girl of good Scottish stock, Marion Stuart. They would have five children, three boys and two girls.

Reid's political journey began in 1920 when he attended the convention of the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) Battle River Federal Political Association and, to his great surprise, was elected Association president. In that capacity, he became well known throughout the constituency and was consequently nominated as the UFA candidate for Vermilion in the 1921 provincial election. Again he was surprised—shocked, actually: he soundly defeated his only opponent, a Liberal, and the UFA won a majority government.

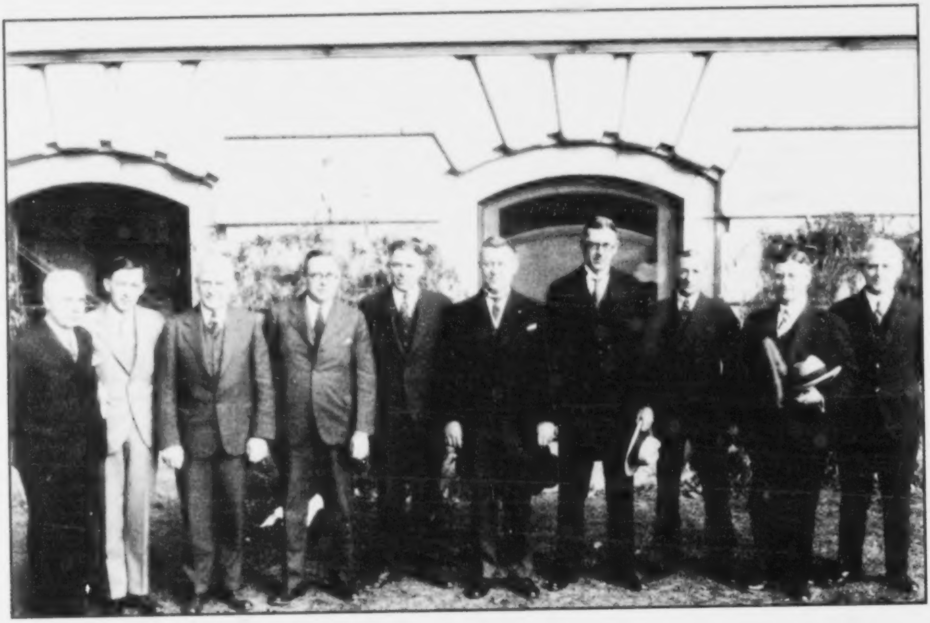
Career in Cabinet

When the members-elect met in Calgary in August 1921 to choose a government leader, Reid chaired the meeting. He was subsequently called to Edmonton by the new Premier, Herbert Greenfield, and became minister of Public Health and Municipal Affairs, partly because of his experience in the Medical Corps and local politics. From 1921 to 1935 he held the portfolios of Public Health (1921–23); Municipal Affairs (1921–23, 1925–34); Treasurer (1923–34); and Lands and Mines (1930–34). As Public Health minister he guided the establishment of new municipal hospitals and instituted procedures that reduced the number of post-operative fatalities. He also broached the idea of sterilizing "mental defectives,"[5] a proposal the Legislature adopted in 1928.



PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (A.482)

The UFA members elect, Lougheed Building, Calgary, summer 1921. Basking in the glow of the great UFA victory in the July provincial election, these earnest individuals were meeting to decide who the Premier would be; after much deliberation they selected Herbert Greenfield, a dirt farmer from Westlock. Richard G. Reid, seated in the right-hand corner of this picture, chaired the meeting and would be called by Greenfield to the Cabinet. Seated in the left-hand corner is Irene Parlby, who would serve with distinction as minister without portfolio in the UFA government. In 1929 she would be one of the "famous five" women who would bring about legal recognition of women as "persons" eligible to sit in the Senate.



GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (ND-3-5008)

A meeting of representatives of the Saskatchewan and Alberta Cabinets, c. 1930. At the end of the "roaring twenties," the UFA government was at the pinnacle of its power and success. The economy was booming, the publicly owned northern railways had been sold off at a significant profit (a popular move), and the government had obtained agreement for the transfer of control over natural resources from Ottawa to Alberta (thus paving the way for the prosperity of the post-World War II era). Towering over the others, in height and intellectually, was John E. Brownlee, the second UFA Premier, who is fourth from the right in this photograph. Richard Reid, a popular and well-respected Cabinet minister of several portfolios in both Brownlee's and Greenfield's Cabinets, and UFA Premier starting in 1934, is fourth from the left. In the 1930s the seemingly invincible UFA government was brought low by a sex scandal involving Brownlee, a divorce case involving O.L. McPherson (standing to Reid's left), and the unrelenting ravages of the Great Depression, which Reid would vainly combat as Premier. Standing between McPherson and Brownlee is Saskatchewan Premier J.T.M. Anderson.

As a young Cabinet minister, Reid supported his government's deficit-cutting measures. In 1923 his own Department of Health laid off all school inspection nurses and drastically reduced the number of public health nurses. As provincial treasurer, Reid's main goal was always to balance the budget. Through "rigid economy" and plain luck (an improving economy), he achieved a string of surpluses from 1925 to 1930 (except for 1927). In 1929 he declared with eminent satisfaction that a period of economic expansion was "directly ahead."[6]

Unfortunately, the Great Depression soon struck, and Reid was again awash in a sea of deficits. In 1932–33 he responded by "slashing" expenditures and hiking taxes—he even introduced a provincial income tax—but still the red ink flowed. Reid learned to live with the Depression deficits, but only because the alternative (more taxes or spending reductions) would, in his view, produce severe hardship; he certainly was no Keynesian, no believer in priming the economic pump. Nor was he a modern-day supply-side economist. In 1930–31, before it was clear the Depression would be a long-term disaster, Reid resisted Liberal calls for tax cuts[7]; had he granted them the debt would have ballooned out of control.

Like most conservative farmer politicians, Reid strongly believed in collective self-help through cooperation. On behalf of the government, in 1923 he visited several northwest U.S. states to learn about their cooperative pools, and he travelled back to Alberta with Aaron Sapiro, a spellbinding American pool propagandist whose inspiring speeches led to the birth of the Alberta Wheat Pool. Two years later Reid introduced a bill to allow the Pool to buy or build grain elevators. When the cooperative credit societies were attacked in 1931 for alleged operating irregularities, Reid leapt to their defence.[8] He also worked tirelessly for a federal-provincial long-term farm loan scheme that was finally implemented in 1929.[9]

Believing in self-help and fiscal prudence, Reid considered the debt-ridden, government-owned railways a millstone around his neck, even when they began to turn a profit in 1927. In his opinion, the sale of the railways in 1929 removed "a huge and ever-growing burden that was influencing and hindering legitimate development in other fields." When the new (private) owners of the railways announced extensions in the north, Reid felt vindicated: "Had this responsibility remained with the government," he commented, "the development of the Peace River would have been retarded as a result of the inability of the province to provide for the capital expenditures necessary."[10]

Wary of the financial risk involved, Reid was cool to the UFA convention's chorus of demands, in the late 1920s, for public rather than private development of hydro-electricity. While endorsing the Assembly's approval of public ownership in principle, he cautioned that "the government should be careful about embarking upon such a scheme and should determine whether it would be immediately self-supporting or how soon it would be."[11]

As a fiscally conservative treasurer, Reid was not always a sympathetic Municipalities minister. In 1926, when several municipalities pressured the government to take more responsibility for the care of indigents, Reid "fought hard to keep this additional charge from the province." Three years later he insisted, in the face of vigorous protests, that municipalities pay 10% of the cost of old-age pensions for citizens within their jurisdictions.[12]

Selection as Premier

Despite opposition to some of his policies, Reid was easily re-elected in 1926 and 1930, and by the 1930s he had become a popular—and the most prominent—minister in Cabinet. Thus, when UFA Premier John Brownlee resigned after his conviction in the MacMillan sex-scandal case, Reid was the natural and unanimous choice of the UFA caucus as Brownlee's successor. But it was an inauspicious victory. Reid's fledgling government faced intractable economic difficulties, including onerous debt charges, and the party was cracking at the foundation. Two UFA MLAs, Peter Miskew and Omer St. Germaine, had bolted to join the Liberals a few months before Reid became Premier; the fiery O.L. McPherson, the former minister of Public Works, was mired in a divorce controversy; and the formidable and once unconquerable Brownlee had been unceremoniously dethroned. With Brownlee and McPherson humiliated and relegated to the back benches, Reid's government was jittery and lacking in confidence.

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (A.6467)

Richard Gavin Reid, Premier of Alberta, 1934–35.

This new UFA administration, headed by an unproven Premier—a man without the commanding presence of Brownlee—appeared vulnerable; and the opposition, led by the scandal-mongering and grittily abrasive Liberal leader, W.R. Howson, licked its chops. In his first public address, Reid beat off Howson's charges of government graft regarding highway contracts, interference in the administration of justice, and excessive debt. The charge of extravagant spending would be made throughout Reid's time as Premier. Critics, Liberal and Conservative, would hammer the UFA government for purchasing new cars for ministers; for Cabinet members' traveling expenses, which were alleged to be exorbitant; and for exceeding budgeted amounts. Reid and his ministers ably refuted these mostly groundless criticisms, but Howson never gave up. In 1935 he asserted that increased taxation "was causing the confiscation of homes." Reid denied the allegation, demonstrated that the tax burden was substantially lower than it had been in 1921, and expressed his inability to "understand the attitude of some groups in the opposition who were constantly urging huge expenditures for roads, bridges, and other undertakings, while at the same time saying to the government, 'You are spending too much.'"[13]

While deflecting opposition barbs, Reid's government moved quickly to assist drought-stricken farmers. In the fall of 1934, it announced a program to buy the cattle of farmers who could not afford feed. The province also worked out a deal with Ottawa and the railways to share the costs of relocating dry-belt farmers to more northerly locations.[14] These were not glamorous initiatives, but they were effective, stop-gap measures to deal with an ongoing calamity.

The Reid government dealt with another seemingly intractable problem: what to do with the dilapidated and costly rural telephone lines of the province's publicly owned telephone company, Alberta Government Telephones (AGT). By 1933 the rural system was "close to the end of its useful life," and by 1934 a prohibitive $4 million of repairs and upgrades were needed to put it into good condition. Largely because of the rural sections, which were steadily losing subscribers, the company was bogged down by an unsustainable yearly deficit. Therefore the government encouraged the organization of hundreds of rural mutual telephone companies, which bought the rural lines from AGT, to the apparent satisfaction of the new farmer owners, who, in many cases, improved their local service.

Reid was relieved the province had unloaded a heavy burden that, to his way of thinking, had "threatened the economic stability" of the entire provincial telephone system.[15]

Although committed to such cost-cutting measures, the Reid government made a striking effort to introduce health insurance. In response to the report of a health commission appointed by the Brownlee government, Reid's government decided to experiment with a health plan in the Camrose constituency. The supporting legislation, which was intended to eventually apply to all municipalities wishing to participate, was breathtakingly comprehensive. It provided for every resident to receive free medical, dental, and hospital care, including surgery, all laboratory and diagnostic services and drugs. The plan was to be jointly funded by the province, employers, and employees. Alas, the election intervened, and it was never implemented.[16]

While experimenting with new initiatives, Reid was happy to lobby Ottawa on Alberta's behalf and assist Albertans with federal programs. His government quickly helped farmers organize under the federal Natural Products Marketing Act, which provided for government marketing of agricultural products (the UFA government even tried to take credit for initiating the Act). The province also made provision for farmers to apply for debt reduction under the federal Farmers' Creditors' Arrangement Act. When Prime Minister Bennett set up the Royal Commission on Price Spreads and Mass Buying, Reid proposed that it investigate the cost of farm machinery, lubricating oil, and gasoline. He also called for a national wheat board—the hope of many a prairie farmer.[17]

Like Reid, the 1935 annual UFA convention urged the creation of a wheat board, and, consistent with the convention's wishes, the Reid government attempted to reform the judiciary and refinance provincial and municipal debts at a lower interest rate. But beneath the veneer of unanimity lay deep ideological divisions. The government was relatively cautious and conservative; the convention and especially the leaders of the UFA organization, like the UFA MPs, were inclined toward socialism. Reid was doubtless uncomfortable with the convention's call for public ownership and development of natural resources and utilities, and he considered UFA president and MP Robert Gardiner a "far left" radical who unfortunately "got much more notice than the solid chaps." He also considered the alliance between the UFA and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) (the predecessor of today's New Democrats) an "unholy amalgamation." Unfortunately for Reid, most Albertans were losing interest in his opinions and were listening to what he would later call "the voice of the tempter."[18]

The Rise of Social Credit

The "tempter" was William Aberhart, a high school principal and lay minister who had been converted to the Social Credit doctrine in 1932 and began promoting it through his popular religious broadcasts. The brainchild of Major C.H. Douglas, Social Credit theory was based on the notion that economic problems were caused by a permanent deficiency of purchasing power, which could be remedied by the state paying dividends to citizens or subsidizing producers (and thus lowering prices to consumers). These measures would make up the shortfall in purchasing power and thus end depression.

Well before Reid became Premier, Aberhart proposed that the government pay each adult a $25 monthly dividend. For debt-plagued farmers and the unemployed, it was a tantalizing proposition, and the Reid government, knowing it could not possibly dish out that kind of money, perceived Aberhart as a threat, even if he claimed to have no designs on political power. The left-leaning leadership of the UFA organization also disliked Aberhart. Like many left-wingers of the day, they endorsed the Douglas version of Social Credit, with its promise of state-issued credit, as a step toward socialism, but they believed Aberhart's promise of $25 a month could never be met (for financial and constitutional reasons). In their minds, Aberhart's plan was a misguided and crude application of Douglas's sophisticated scheme, which did not promise a specific amount.

Expressing this critical view of Aberhart, the *United Farmer*, official organ of the UFA organization and an apologist of the UFA government, quoted the opinion of British Social Credit authorities that Aberhart should not form a Social Credit party and that Social Credit could only be implemented by a national government. To highlight that Aberhart's plan was not Douglas's plan, the *United Farmer* repeatedly cited, with evident satisfaction, the conclusion of W.L. Bardsley, a right-hand man of Douglas, that Aberhart's booklet, "The Douglas System for Alberta," was "fallacious from start to finish."[19]

These were harsh words, but not all the bridges between the UFA and Aberhart had been burned. The was still one opportunity for the UFA organization and government to work with Aberhart rather than against him—one last opportunity to save Reid's government from utter annihilation—one last chance to avert a drastic change in the course of Alberta's political history. It came in mid-January 1935 at the annual UFA convention, where the delegates debated whether or not to adopt Aberhart's plan as a plank of the UFA platform for the upcoming provincial election. In the midst of the passionate discussion, "one supporter of Mr. Aberhart declared that we had in Alberta far abler men than Major Douglas to deal with the application of Social Credit; another declared that if the UFA did not introduce a plan of Social Credit his local would take their support elsewhere."[20]

These were telling statements. Most Albertans did not, or soon would not, care whether Aberhart was "pure" by Douglas standards; they had more faith in Bible Bill than in the eccentric English originator of Social Credit, whose ideas never seemed as practical and tangible as Aberhart's promised $25 dividend. Moreover, many UFA and United Farm Women of Alberta (UFWA) locals *would* become Social Credit locals, and thousands of UFA supporters, even many UFA and UFWA pioneers—many who had built up the farm movement and fought the powers that were for better conditions; many who, in better times, had driven miles by horse and buggy or Model T over bumpy, dusty, or muddy dirt roads, in the searing heat or pelting rain; with the babies crying and the children happily chattering; arriving at the school house, greeting friend and neighbour alike; full of hopes and expectations and dreams of a new heaven and a new earth; casting their ballot for "our" UFA government—were shifting their allegiance to the pudgy, charismatic preacher who was now walking up to the front of the convention. All the delegates felt the enormous gravity of the moment, and perhaps a few sensed the impending end, in the manner of King Theoden:

> Where is the horse and the rider? Where is the horn that was blowing?
> They have passed like rain on the mountains, like wind in the meadow.
> The days have gone down in the west behind the hills into shadow.[21]

Aberhart spoke for an hour and a half, outlining his proposals, but he was speaking to the impenitent. When the vote was taken, only 30 of the 400 delegates present raised their hands in favour of the motion to adopt his plan. A mere three of the 90 plus women delegates endorsed Aberhart.[22] It was a declaration of war against Aberhart, who subsequently began organizing a Social Credit political movement.

Government members, UFA leaders, Douglas Social Creditors, and the *United Farmer* launched an all-out offensive. They demonstrated that Aberhart would have to raise a staggering $120 million of extra revenue (ten times the government's present revenue) to pay each adult Albertan a $25 monthly dividend. And who would provide that extra revenue? Miners and especially farmers. Aberhart's proposed "unearned increment" or production "levy" was really a stiff tax on farm products. In addition, he would impose heavy taxes on farm equipment and farm land and unimaginably high sales taxes. Moreover, his proposal to slap a levy on imports (also to raise money for dividends) was sheer absurdity; the province lacked the constitutional power; it was not a sovereign state. Even more absurd—indeed, descending to the depths of lunacy—was Aberhart's contention that he needed only to come up with $10 million to fund his dividends, on the grounds that the dividend certificates would circulate through the economy and return to the Credit House (the agency that would issue the dividends) at least twelve times a year, so that only one- twelfth of the required $120 million would have to be raised. This was "a fundamental fallacy," pontificated the Alberta Provincial Douglas Social Credit Association, the voice of Douglas orthodoxy. "Ten million dollars provides only ten million dollars worth of purchasing power." Then there was Aberhart's intimation that credit was a mere matter of bookkeeping—that Social Credit could be created with the stroke of a fountain pen. That was unmitigated madness![23]

There was no way around it, the critics asserted: in order to pay his dividends, Aberhart would have to exact crushing taxes. His so-called "levies," Premier Reid told a radio audience, were nothing but a "gigantic taxation scheme" that "would have to be borne by the largest group of producers and consumers in Alberta—those in the farming group." Fearing such criticisms, Aberhart backpeddled and issued a statement that the amount of $25 for the dividend had been "merely used for illustration purposes" and was "not intended to be construed as a binding declaration." UFA critics heaped scorn on this reversal, showing that Aberhart had, on numerous occasions, definitely promised a $25 monthly dividend to every man and woman.[24]

As they criticized Aberhart, Reid and his government declared that most of the solutions for Alberta's woes lay beyond their control. The province could do nothing about high tariffs and other federal policies that adversely impacted the west; and Ottawa controlled banking and credit. Thus, only the Dominion government, not any provincial government, had the power to implement Social Credit. Furthermore, Alberta was heavily dependent on outside markets, which determined commodity prices; and the key reason Alberta was bleeding was that prices were so low. "We are poor today," Reid insisted, "because we cannot trade what we … produce for enough to satisfy our requirements."[25]

Such arguments mainly fell on deaf ears; Aberhart's popularity continued to rise. Hoping to arrest that trend, in February 1935 Premier Reid invited Major C.H. Douglas to come to Alberta as a "reconstruction advisor" to the government. Douglas was to suggest what "initiatory" steps toward Social Credit might be taken by the province and prepare a more comprehensive program for possible implementation by Ottawa. Three weeks later, the Alberta Assembly unanimously invited Aberhart to prepare a "comprehensive Social Credit plan for the consideration of this Legislature." Reid "declared the government was willing to go a long way in examining any scheme that promises relief from the heavy burdens the people are now bearing."[20]

A long way? Nonsense. Reid did not believe Aberhart could devise a useful Social Credit plan. He did, nonetheless, confess faith in the general principles of Social Credit. In the political climate of the day, especially in farm circles, to do otherwise would be to court disaster. For many Albertans Social Credit was the great hope, and every politician had to endorse it or risk being cast into the fire. Thus, when the Alberta Provincial Douglas Social Credit Association circulated a questionnaire to all members of the Legislature, asking if they were "in favour of the abolition of poverty," the "utilization of national credit for this purpose," and the "correction of existing laws retarding us in this necessary reform," Reid emphatically replied "in the affirmative."[21]

Having endorsed Douglas Social Credit, Reid hoped that a detailed Aberhart proposal would be easily attacked—hence the invitation to Aberhart to draft one. The government also hoped that Douglas, the father of Social Credit and now Alberta's "reconstruction advisor," would reveal flaws in Aberhart's scheme and support the UFA government's contention that the province, under the BNA Act, could not actually implement Social Credit but could merely take preliminary steps toward it. In short, the Reid government hoped to discredit Aberhart by driving a wedge between him and Douglas.

Unfortunately for Reid, this attempt to trap Aberhart failed. Sensing danger, Aberhart declined to prepare a plan, thus leaving the UFA without a direct target. All was not lost, however. Dean J. Weir and Professor G.A. Elliott, in their widely publicized testimony before the Agriculture Committee, concluded that Aberhart-style Social Credit would be unconstitutional and economically disastrous. These were arrows in the government's quiver; Douglas was less helpful. He refused to condemn Aberhart in his report, but he did, with some prodding from Attorney General J.F. Lymburn, mildly criticize features of Aberhart's Social Credit proposals. Alluding to Aberhart's taxation schemes in a letter to Lymburn, which was later published, Douglas concluded:

> Generally speaking it would appear upon the face of it that Mr. Aberhart has not grasped that Social Credit involves the creation of additional purchasing power, either by a reduction of prices below cost, for the purpose of enabling the consumer to obtain more goods for a given amount of money in his possession, while the financial deficit thus caused is made up to the producer in fresh credit; or by additional sufficient purchasing power which is not passed through the costing system and therefore does not increase prices, in the form of a national dividend, or more probably by both of these methods together.[22]

Having thus induced the master himself to pour cool, or at least lukewarm, water on

Premier R.G. Reid delivering Jubilee Day address for the Province of Alberta
COL. F. ANDERSON
COL. F.C. JAMIESON
LT. DAY
CAPT.
MAYOR A. CLARKE
LT. GOV. W.L. WALSH
MRS. W.L. WALSH
CHIEF JUSTICE HARVEY
PREMIER R.G. REID

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (A.3886)

Premier Reid speaking on the occasion of the silver jubilee of King George V's reign in 1935. It was one of the few "light" moments of his premiership; even as Reid spoke the tide of his nemesis—William Aberhart—was rising.

Aberhart, the Reid government could look to the coming election with a trace of hope. Months before the Premier had courageously "declared that the election carried no fears to the government" and had predicted "a great era of social reconstruction in the next ten years for Canada." His prophesy would be dead on—in the long run. In the short run, the UFA government was nearly defeated on a motion asking it to reduce the budget estimates and the House membership.[9] It was an ominous portent.

More positive was the Reid government's "virtual moratorium," the Agricultural Industry Stabilization Act of 1935. It provided that, regardless of creditors' claims, the farmer could, from his farm proceeds, "retain not only all operating expenses, etc.," Reid explained, "but living expenses and costs of medical attention, etc., for his family."[10] It was a stunningly radical piece of legislation, but would it be enough to satisfy debt-ravaged farmers?

It did impress some, but many Albertans were unimpressed by the UFA government's efforts to prevent newspapers from reporting, in any detail, judicial cases involving dissolution of marriages. Seemingly a response to the "salacious" coverage of the divorce case of former UFA Cabinet minister O.L. McPherson, this legislation was decried as an attack on freedom of the press. During the debate leading to its passage in the spring of 1935, J.M. Dechene, Liberal member for St. Paul, declared that the UFA government was acting like Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler.[11]

The End of the UFA Government

Such rhetoric was common during the electoral campaign of 1935. Referring to the undemocratic way Social Credit candidates were chosen—Aberhart and his Central Advisory Board made the final selection—and criticizing Aberhart's advice to supporters "to refuse to hear anything that can be said against his policies," opponents labeled Aberhart dictatorial and even fascist.[12]

Sometimes Aberhart responded in kind. In early July he indirectly referred to the UFWA as the "Undernourished Fool Women of Alberta." One "undernourished fool woman" retorted that she

> doesn't like the idea of depending upon that … elusive promised monthly dividend and has an idea that we will be more "undernourished" and more "fools" than ever if we allow Mr. Aberhart to … take five cents a bushel "unearned [?] increment levy"… and … collect a sales tax (I mean a levy) from us on all our implements and everything else we eat, wear, or use.[13]

The mudslinging became more intense after mid-July when Reid called an election for August 22. Liberal leader W.R. Howson, always good for a misleading criticism, erroneously suggested that the UFA government was opposed to an important pillar of any Social Credit scheme: a government-run central bank. Plumbing the limits of ridiculousness, Howson later pledged his party to assist "in rebuilding the UFA as a social and economic organization for the practical benefit of agriculturalists." In other words, if the UFA would be nice and get out of politics—go back to the way it was before 1919—Howson would give it every encouragement. Reid smiled:

> Mr. Howson asks the farmers to commit political suicide by transferring their allegiance from their own organization to the Liberal Party. He will have his answer on August 22nd, and I am confident that his invitation will be emphatically rejected at the polls.[14]

Reid would prove to be right, but not in the way he had hoped.

On the campaign trail in Camrose, Reid expressed pride that the UFA had raised the "standard of political life." He boasted that "the closest scrutiny had failed to bring to light any delinquencies of the administration." Reid was absolutely correct; the UFA had provided clean government. He also underlined his government's fiscal responsibility, its extensive road-building program, and its low tax regime—the lowest west of the Great Lakes. At Stettler "he pointed out that by maintaining the credit of the province they had been able to keep schools and hospitals open and pay mothers' allowances and relief and old-age pensions in a period of great financial difficulty."[15]

In July Reid came out with his "election manifesto." Highlighting the UFA government's accomplishments, it loftily pledged "to bring a sense of security into the lives of men and women and bring back to youth the vision of life as a great and worthwhile adventure." Appealing to the left wing of the UFA, it committed the government to establish an oil refinery. Soon after Reid would prophesy, with uncanny accuracy, that the "near future will witness the greatest explorations for oil which this province has ever known."[16] He would live to see that development, but would not preside over it.

In the two weeks before the election, Reid conducted an exhausting and extensive speaking tour of the province, addressing audiences of four or five hundred or more.

Halfway through he concluded that "the campaign of alluring promises launched by opponents of the farmers' movement for the purpose of accomplishing its destruction had been sharply checked; there is a rallying of the people of the province to the UFA government."[57]

It was a vain attempt to boost morale, or at best wishful thinking; in his heart Reid knew better. On the hustings, he had heard hordes of hostile Social Credit hecklers; and even when the crowds had courteously listened to him, out of deference to the venerable institution that the UFA movement had once been, UFA stalwarts had come up to him at the end of the meetings, apologetically but resolutely saying, "Sorry, but we're still voting Social Credit."[58]

The fact was that the people of Alberta were not eternally grateful that the UFA had been honest, efficient, frugal and had maintained a bare level of services. Nor were they impressed with Reid's dire warning that if Aberhart won he would destroy the credit of the province and render it unable to carry on. Simply put, Albertans were tired of hearing, *ad nauseum*, what was wrong with Aberhart's Social Credit, because at least Aberhart was willing to do or try *something*. At a UFA political meeting, one farmer blurted out:

> I sell a steer for hardly enough to pay the freight. Now, would you tell me what I have got to lose in trying Social Credit whether I believe in it or not?

The UFA's message—Trust us rather than them; look what we've done for you—was not good enough. Above all, Albertans were fed up with the Reid government's insistence that Alberta's woes were beyond its control and that the provincial government could do little to help them. One Hanna-area farmer explained why Aberhart was so much more attractive than the tired UFA government:

> Instead of saying, like the old UFA men, "We shall try to get monetary reform for you," Aberhart said to us, "We most assuredly will get monetary reform. We won't bother with Ottawa about monetary reform. We're going to establish our own bank and our own monetary system in Alberta."[59]

As the day of destiny approached, the UFA government was besieged by armies of political opponents: the Liberals firing at the UFA's record and promising anything and everything, including monetary reform and possibly Social Credit; Aberhart and his throngs battering down the ramparts of the UFA status quo and promising to bring in the millennium. Would the election, as one UFA man wondered, "be the finish and annihilation of the United Farmers of Alberta?"[60] Or would the farmer government, like the people of Rohan, be saved from the legions of Uruk-hai by the Christ-like wizard Gandalf, who suddenly appeared—magnificent in splendour, the sunrise radiant behind him—on the hill overlooking Helm's Deep?

Reid was no white rider on a white horse; there would be no dawn for the UFA. Every single UFA candidate was crushed; not one was re-elected. Reid himself polled only 876 votes, compared to the Social Credit candidate's 2,452. Even the Liberal candidate, with over a thousand votes, beat Reid (and Reid barely edged out the Communist candidate).[40] It was utter humiliation; worse still, the UFA was destroyed as a political force. Having attracted barely 11% of the popular vote (Social Credit carried 54%), the UFA would limp out of politics forever in 1939, while Social Credit would build a 36-year dynasty that would indelibly shape the political future of Alberta.

Reid stepped down as Premier on September 3, 1935. After a brief appearance at the 1936 UFA convention, in which he defended his government's actions, Reid slipped into obscurity. He worked as a commission agent and acted on the federal Mobilization Board during the Second World War. Subsequently, and for many years, he was the librarian for Canadian Utilities Limited in Edmonton and became an Honorary Member of the Edmonton Library Association. On October 17, 1980, he passed away in Edmonton at the more-than-ripe old age of 101.[41]

Conclusion

Although he lived a full and well-rounded life, Richard Reid was a tragic figure as Premier. His Scots Presbyterian values of thrift and self-help and his hands-off approach to government were well suited to the 1920s when he enjoyed success as a Cabinet minister; but they were ill-adapted to the depression conditions of the 1930s. Had he been Premier in the second half of the 1920s, Reid might have led his government to victory, but he was unable to generate policies that would bring hope to a hopeless decade; and he totally lacked the charisma that was the hallmark of many successful Depression-era Premiers. A plain-speaking man, without brilliant oratorical flair, he possessed none of the religious aura of Aberhart; and he could not inspire the confidence of his predecessor, Brownlee, either amongst the electorate or his own party members. Yet even Brownlee could not have saved the government in 1935. Stained by sex scandals and ransacked by the Depression, it could not compete with Aberhart's political organization and propaganda, and it was never serious about cooperating with him. One frustrated UFA worker vainly pleaded: "Why in the name of common sense can't you fellows … make some kind of working arrangement with this man [Aberhart] on this subject of Social Credit?"[42] Nor would Reid's government condescend to match Aberhart's promises of monthly dividends and a "just" or fair price for producers, rightly believing that such promises could never be delivered. Exasperated, some of the UFA's left-wing supporters voted for Aberhart, whose program seemed more "progressive" than the government's record. On the other hand, many farmers (and others) were alarmed by the association, however vague, of the UFA government with the CCF. They wanted Social Credit, not socialism—witness the fate of the pro-CCF UFA provincial candidates, many of whom were beaten by a five-to-one margin.[43]

Only a dynamic leader with a fresh vision and new ideas and a magnetic personality that could rise above these challenges and lure the masses—only such a leader could have prevented a UFA collapse. In 1935 Albertans wanted a saviour. Richard Gavin Reid was a mere mortal.

Notes

1. John J. Barr, author of another chapter in this book, frequently saw Reid on the bus in Edmonton in the mid-1960s.
2. The following information about Reid's life before his election in 1921 was obtained from: *Edmonton Journal*, July 5, 1934, p. 13; July 6, 1934, p. 2; Glenbow Alberta Archives (GAA), Walter Norman and Amelia Turner Smith Fonds, file 183, biographical sketch of UFA ministers; file 185, clipping from *Grain Growers' Guide*, August 17, 1921; Richard Gavin Reid, "From the Old Land to the New: A Pioneer's Impressions and Recollections," *Alberta Historical Review* 1 (Winter 1957): 3–7; *Alberta Historical Review* 2 (Spring 1957): 1; GAA, RCT-17-1 and RCT-20, taped interviews of R.G. Reid by Una Maclean, 1962; Provincial Archives of Alberta, transcript of tape-recorded interview of R.G. Reid, as revised by R.G. Reid, January 1970.
3. *Edmonton Journal*, July 6, 1934, p. 2.
4. Ibid.
5. Scrapbook Hansard (SH), 1923, p. 128c, "Alberta's Financial Situation and How the Government is Dealing With It: A Summary of the Speeches Delivered by Members of the Cabinet During the Debate on the Budget," pp. 7–8; RCT-20, interview by Una MacLean.
6. SH, 1927, p. 103, *Edmonton Journal*, March 25; SH, 1929, p. 19, *Edmonton Journal*, February 8; SH, 1923, p. 128c, "Alberta's Financial Situation," p. 6.
7. SH, 1932, pp. 35–36, *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 25; SH, 1933, p. 40, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 3; SH, 1933, p. 44, *Edmonton Journal*, March 3; SH, 1930, p. 34, *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 12; SH, 1931, p. 62, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 3.
8. *Edmonton Journal*, August 3, 1923, p. 11; SH, 1925, p. 80, *Edmonton Journal*, April 7; SH, 1931, p. 77, *Edmonton Journal*, February 28; SH, 1931, p. 71, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 6.
9. SH, 1924, p. 178, *Edmonton Journal*, April 11, 1924; SH, 1925, p. 54, *Edmonton Journal*, March 21; SH, 1928, p. 349, *Edmonton Journal*, March 20; SH, 1930, p. 33, *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 12.
10. SH, 1930, p. 33, *Edmonton Bulletin*, February 1930; SH, 1930, pp. 31–32, *Edmonton Journal*, February 11.
11. SH, 1930, p. 89, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 19; Susan Kooyman, "The Policies and Legislation of the United Farmers of Alberta Government, 1921–1935" (MA thesis: University of Calgary, 1981), 78–79.
12. SH, 1926, p. 53, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 10; SH, 1929, p. 140, *Edmonton Journal*, March 15.
13. *United Farmer*, March 22, 1935, p. 2; August 17, 1934, p. 2.
14. Ibid., September 7, 1934, p. 4; September 21, 1934, p. 12; August 31, p. 12.
15. Kooyman, "Policies and Legislation," 113–15; transcript of tape-recorded interview; *United Farmer*, October 12, 1934, pp. 1, 8–9; SH, 1935, p. 59, *Edmonton Bulletin*, March 9.
16. Kooyman, "Policies and Legislation," 89–90; John D. Hunt, *Synopsis of Important Acts Passed at the Fifth Session of the Seventh Legislature* (Edmonton: W.D. McLean, King's Printer, 1935), 33–34; SH, 1935, p. 18, *Edmonton Journal*, February 16.
17. Hunt, *Synopsis of Important Acts*, 50; *United Farmer*, September 21, 1934, p. 4; December 21, 1934, p. 13; October 4, 1934, p. 4; Smith Fonds, file 72, radio address by R.G. Reid, May 10, 1935.
18. Franklin L. Foster, *John E. Brownlee: A Biography* (Lloydminster, AB: Foster Learning, Inc., 1996), 263; transcript of tape-recorded interview; *United Farmer*, January 25, 1935, pp. 2–3.
19. *United Farmer*, January 25, 1935, p. 4; April 5, 1935, p. 4; October 5, 1934, p. 9; Sept. 28, 1934, p. 9.

20. Ibid., January 18, 1935, p. 12.

21. Monologue of King Theoden from *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, Alliance Atlantis, New Line Productions, Inc., 2002.

22. *United Farmer*, January 18, 1935, p. 1; February 8, 1935, p. 13.

23. Ibid., February 22, 1935, p. 9; February 8, 1935, p. 9; August 9, 1935, p. 15; May 3, 1935, p. 18; February 1, 1935, p. 9; June 14, 1935, p. 13.

24. Ibid., May 10, 1935, p. 1; March 1, 1935, pp. 4, 13.

25. Ibid., May 10, 1935, p. 2.

26. Ibid., February 22, 1935, p. 1; March 8, 1935, p. 1.

27. Ibid., March 15, 1935, p. 5.

28. Ibid., June 14, 1935, p. 7; John A. Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 163–65.

29. *United Farmer*, February 22, 1935, p. 13; *Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1935–36*, 349.

30. *United Farmer*, April 12, 1935, p. 1; June 21, 1935, p. 9.

31. Ibid., April 20, 1935, p. 12; SH, 1935, p. 129, *Edmonton Bulletin*, April 16; *Synopsis of Important Acts*, 40–41.

32. *United Farmer*, May 3, 1935, p. 4; March 29, 1935, p. 4; Apr. 5, 1935, p. 9; David R. Elliott and Iris Miller, *Bible Bill: A Biography of William Aberhart* (Edmonton: Reidmore Books, 1987), 184–85.

33. *United Farmer*, July 5, 1935, p. 12; July 19, 1935, p. 11.

34. Ibid., August 16, 1935, p. 1; August 9, 1935, p. 5.

35. Ibid., June 21, 1935, pp. 7, 9.

36. Ibid., July 26, 1935, pp. 1, 5; August 16, 1935, p. 9.

37. Ibid., August 16, 1935, p. 9.

38. John J. Barr, *The Dynasty: The Rise and Fall of Social Credit in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), 78.

39. Elliott and Miller, *Bible Bill*, 196; Kooyman, "Policies and Legislation," 122. Reid expressed warnings about the dangers of Social Credit for the province's credit during his radio broadcasts. See Smith Fonds, file 72, broadcasts of June 5, 1935, and August 21, 1935.

40. *United Farmer*, July 26, 1935, p. 9.

41. *Returns: General Election of the Province of Alberta*, August 22, 1935.

42. Elliott and Miller, *Bible Bill*, 233; D. Blake McDougall, *Premiers of the North-West Territories and Alberta, 1897–1991* (Edmonton: Alberta Legislative Library, 1991), 36, 38; *Calgary Herald*, October 18, 1980, p. A2.

43. Smith Fonds, file 9, C.W. Nixdorff to "Editor of United Farmer," March 11, 1935. The writer, a long-standing UFA member, posed this question to Norman Smith, editor of the *United Farmer*, and to Norman Priestley, vice-president of the UFA organization, but he undoubtedly would have said the same thing to Reid or any other member of the UFA government.

44. For example, the fate of three UFA candidates who openly declared their support for the CCF was as follows: C.W. Robinson (Hand Hills) received 707 votes compared to 3,270 for the Social Credit candidate; Fred Strashok (Victoria) received 319 votes compared to 2,045 for the Social Credit candidate; Wilbert Stevens (Wetaskiwin) received 506 votes compared to 2,762 for the Social Credit candidate. *Returns: General Election of the Province of Alberta*. Some explicitly pro-CCF candidates did better, and factors besides CCF affiliation largely account for the defeat of the above (and other) UFA candidates, but it does seem that such affiliation generally hurt more than it helped.

The Social Credit Premiers 1935-1971

William Aberhart 1935-1943

DAVID R. ELLIOTT

William (Bible Bill) Aberhart, 1935–1943

Introduction

William Aberhart (1878–1943), Alberta's Premier from 1935 to 1943, was the province's, if not the country's, most controversial Premier.[1] Rising to power during the Great Depression, Aberhart's Social Credit government introduced radical legislation regarding banking, the press, and property and civil rights, which attracted international attention. His was the first Social Credit government in the world. Most of Aberhart's unique Social Credit legislation failed because it was unworkable, or because it was declared *ultra vires* by parliament or the courts, but his reforms in petroleum and gas resource management had far-reaching impacts for the economic recovery of the province. As well, his government introduced educational and health reforms that improved the lives of the province's citizens.

Aberhart and his government have been the subject of many scholarly and popular writings. Studies published in the 1950s, based on the direction of the contemporary Manning administration, tended to view Aberhart's government as right-wing. Marxist economist C.B. Macpherson's *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System* (1953) depicted Aberhart's movement as a reactionary revolt of small businessmen. John A. Irving's *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta* (1959) saw Aberhart's rise to power as an example of mob psychology.

Later examination of Aberhart's political and economic pamphlets led to a new understanding of his political and economic orientation as being more social democratic than capitalistic.[2] David R. Elliott concluded that Aberhart's thinking and political behaviour stemmed from a quasi-social gospel ideology with left-leaning fascist tendencies.[3] Alvin Finkel's *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (1989) examined the Aberhart government's leftist economic direction, which became more rightist under Manning's later administration. Sociologist Edward Bell's *Social Classes and Social Credit in Alberta* (1993) noted the working-class appeal of Social Credit during the Aberhart years.

Bob Hesketh's *Major Douglas and Alberta Social Credit* (1997) demonstrated how much the paranoid thinking of Major Douglas influenced Alberta legislation during Aberhart's administration. The anti-Semitic nature of Social Credit theory was ably analyzed by Janine Stingel's *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (2000). While Aberhart was not personally anti-Semitic, his association with Douglas and his use of anti-Semitic buzz words cast an unfortunate shadow over Alberta. Aberhart was a complex individual, and ongoing research will continue to raise new perspectives about his life.

Early Life

William Aberhart was born on a farm in Hibbert Township, Perth County, Ontario. During his childhood, the family moved to another farm at Egmondville, near Seaforth in Huron County, so that the older boys would be closer to the high school in Seaforth. Vocationally torn between business and education, William Aberhart went on to study at the Chatham Business College, Mitchell Model School, and the normal school in Hamilton. After teaching school for two years in Morris Township, Huron County, Aberhart combined his training and specialized in teaching commercial subjects at the Brantford Collegiate Institute in 1902. By 1905 he was principal, but by that time he was also considering the Presbyterian ministry and was taking an extra-mural B.A. program from Queen's University in preparation for divinity studies that he planned to take at Knox College, Toronto.

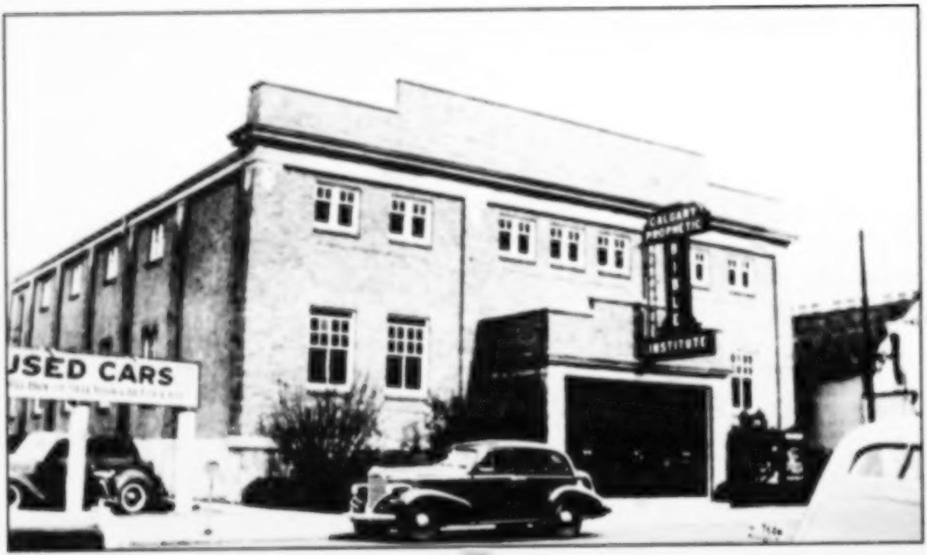
In 1910 Aberhart, with his wife and two daughters, Khona and Ola, moved to Calgary when a better teaching offer was not matched by the Brantford School Board. By 1915 he was the principal of Crescent Heights High School, the largest public school in the city. He was an organizer and took an active part in all aspects of the school's intellectual, social, and athletic activities. His efforts to impose his will on the school caused conflicts with many of the male staff members, and the school board had to step in. The board transferred his critics, but warned Aberhart that if there were any more complaints, he would lose his job.

Besides his vocation as an educator, Aberhart's avocation was religion. Having given up the idea of becoming a full-time minister, he continued as a very active layman, teaching Bible classes and supply preaching in Presbyterian, Methodist, and Baptist churches around Calgary. By 1916 he had become the unofficial minister of Westbourne Baptist Church, a small mission near the Stampede grounds.

Many of Aberhart's Bible students followed him to Westbourne Baptist after he had fallen out with the Presbyterian and Methodist churches because of his peculiar theological beliefs. He had been teaching a method of biblical interpretation known as dispensationalism, which divided the Bible into sections (dispensations) applicable to various time periods and peoples. Coupled with this approach was his extreme emphasis on "prophecies" regarding the "Rapture," a secret removal of all "true" Christians before the reign of the anti-Christ, a super-human demonic dictator who was to rule the world for seven years until Christ returned to earth. Some of these concepts Aberhart had borrowed from various sectarian groups; others were the products of his own imagination. He also made excessive claims for the absolute infallibility of the King James Version of the Bible. None of these ideas were held by the mainline churches.

Aberhart was very forceful in presenting his views, views that caused him problems with the officials of the Baptist denomination. He had introduced his own version of "pentecostalism" into the church, and it went through a phase of "holy-rolling" and faith healing. He also created the position of "apostle" for himself and linked himself with the original apostles through a dubious use of church history. Baptist officials were not pleased with his innovations, and they did not like Aberhart's authoritarian personality and his refusal to take ecclesiastical direction. Unsuccessfully they tried to remove him from Westbourne Baptist Church, but the congregation backed him.

Aberhart's Sunday activities soon outgrew Westbourne Baptist Church, and he moved his meetings into the Grand and Palace theatres. In 1925 he began to broadcast his Sunday services over CFCN, then the most powerful radio station in Alberta. Radio broadcasting



SOURCE: CYRIL HUTCHINSON

The Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, c. 1940.

gave him an even greater personal following, and in 1927 he opened the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute on Eighth Avenue to train ministerial students in his own version of Baptist fundamentalism. Aberhart was a superb organizer and financed the erection of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute by dividing the construction of the building into various units that he sold as "sods," "bricks," "mortar," and "rafters." He was the apostle of Westbourne Baptist Church, dean of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, even as he continued his day job as the principal of Crescent Heights High School.

There was a certain irony in Aberhart's use of movie theatres for his religious meetings, because he had denounced movie attendance as "worldly" and condemned the "sin" in the cinema. Many of his followers quit attending the movies after hearing his sermons. However, he did not always practice what he preached. In 1927 Cecil B. DeMille's new biblical epic, "The King of Kings," which featured the life of Christ, was showing at the Tivoli Theatre, and Mrs. Aberhart and their boarder, Miss Eva Reid, wanted to see it. They persuaded Aberhart to take them. He reluctantly snuck in with his hat on and collar up and sat in the back row. On the next Sunday, while Aberhart was broadcasting on air, the choir director, who had just finished a hymn that contained the words "King of Kings," said, "I was so glad to see Brother Aberhart at the theatre the other night watching the 'King of Kings.'" Aberhart was embarrassed by the public exposure of his "worldliness," but the taboo against movie attendance continued in his religious organizations, even though he sometimes violated his own directives.

Aberhart was an extremely busy man; indeed he was a workaholic. The great amount of time that he spent on his extracurricular religious activities caused considerable concern among the members of the Calgary School Board, and in 1929 they sought to censure him. They had even received complaints that Aberhart had been using students to stuff envelopes for his religious organizations during and after school. After being called onto the carpet, Aberhart promised to cut back on his religious activities and devote more time to his occupation.

Soon afterwards the Westbourne Baptist congregation, which had moved into the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, broke with Aberhart over theology, finances, and leadership issues and withdrew. The congregation had been unable to find a minister who could work with Aberhart and accept the doctrinal peculiarities that he had made part of the church's creed. The congregation had also been expected to carry the expenses of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, even though they had no vote regarding its decisions. Most of the people of Westbourne Baptist Church and a number of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute board members quit and decided to move back to their old building. Now having to take more responsibilities to keep the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute going, Aberhart was forced to throw more of his energy into his extracurricular religious activities. From his loyal followers he organized a new church called the Bible Institute Baptist Church, which met in the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute. The new church was marked by its high sectarian theology and separatist attitudes.

Aberhart's active life became even busier after the Great Depression commenced in 1929. Donations to his radio programs fell off as money became tighter. From his radio correspondents he learned of the difficult conditions on rural farms. He also had graduates coming back to Crescent Heights High School telling him of their difficulties in finding work. They asked him if he could do anything for them, and he was deeply affected by their plight.

The desperate conditions often caused people to think in apocalyptic terms. In 1931 Aberhart and his theological student, Ernest C. Manning, wrote a play called "The Branding Irons of the Antichrist," which depicted the awful plight of unbelievers left behind after the so-called Rapture. The play had been influenced by Sydney Watson's apocalyptic novel, *The Mark of the Beast*, and was performed at the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute and was even taken on the road across Alberta. Some of those who witnessed the play were left terrified, and it shaped their subsequent thinking. It also reflected an undercurrent in Aberhart's religious thinking. His was a religion of fear and was very susceptible to conspiracy theories. The identity of the future anti-Christ was a frequent object of discussion in Aberhart's sermons.

During the summer of 1932, when Aberhart was in Edmonton marking provincial departmental examinations, he was again introduced to the Social Credit theories of Major Clifford H. Douglas by a fellow teacher, Charles M. Scarborough, who had for several years failed to interest him in Social Credit. The social and economic conditions of the Depression had made Aberhart ripe for the reception of those radical ideas, and he was converted overnight in his room at St. Stephen's College after reading Maurice Colbourne's *Unemployment or War*,[4] an abbreviated version of Douglas's ideas. Colbourne was a British actor who had previously appeared in Calgary with George Bernard Shaw's plays and had popularized Douglas's ideas as a sideline.

An engineer with dubious academic and professional credentials, Major Douglas maintained that there was "poverty in the midst of plenty" because of a lack of purchasing power on the part of consumers. The workers were not receiving enough wages because of the high cost of credit that companies had to pay to keep their businesses going. Douglas, who was a rabid anti-Semite, linked the high cost of credit to an economic conspiracy of Jewish bankers who supposedly sought to control the economy and world politics. Misrepresenting both Jews and banking, Douglas suggested that governments needed to provide rebates to consumers so that they could purchase the goods sold. How the governments could afford to provide those rebates was never adequately explained by the eccentric Douglas.

Douglas had gained a considerable following in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. He had appeared before the Canadian House of Common's Banking Committee in 1923 and the British Macmillan Commission in 1929, but both governmental bodies had dismissed his ideas. The members of fringe groups, however, accepted his testimony. Some of his prominent British followers, such as the Duke of Bedford, the Marquis of Tavistock, Ezra Pound, and Sir Oswald Mosley, had ties with European fascism.

Aberhart was taken in by Douglas's simplistic presentation of economics. For some of the former board members of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute that was not surprising. They had come to view Aberhart as "chuckle-headed" when it came to finances. Earlier he had tried to invest the Westbourne Baptist Church funds in a pyramid-style investment scheme operated by a confidence man from England. They had successfully blocked this attempt, but Aberhart had persuaded a number of the people in the church to invest in the scheme and they had lost their money. He had also invested in a pecan nut farm in Georgia; it proved to be another failure.

In the fall of 1932, Aberhart began weaving his own version of Social Credit theories into his Sunday afternoon broadcasts on biblical prophecy. People who had previously considered his prophetic lectures the rantings of a madman were now listening to him. He had purposely integrated his themes of religion and economics so that people would have to listen to both areas of his interest.

By December 1932 people were suggesting that Aberhart run for office and implement Social Credit. He privately denied having political ambition, but he certainly saw the potential of political office. He hoped that the existing United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) government, which had a number of Social Credit enthusiasts, would pick up the challenge of introducing Social Credit.

Aberhart's version of Social Credit was a hybrid variety. It probably owed more to the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and to Edward Bellamy, the utopian novelist, than it did to Major Douglas. In January 1933 Aberhart published his first Social Credit document, "The Douglas System of Economics." It was called the "Yellow Pamphlet" owing to its yellow cover, and it was written with the help of a friend, "Hilly" Hill, who happened to be a Communist. It presented a very leftist view of economics and advocated state control over most aspects of life. Like Bellamy, Aberhart proposed that each citizen be provided with the basic essentials of food, shelter, and clothing via a monthly dividend of $25 worth of credit. Anything a person earned above that would be his/her own, but within certain limits.

Also like Bellamy, Aberhart suggested that those who refused to go along with the program would have their civil rights withdrawn and would be treated as "Indians." Bellamy's utopia had concentration camps or reservations for those who would not comply. Besides promising the basic necessities, the Aberhart document advocated equality of the sexes, free education and health care, and the abolition of banks, money, life insurance, inheritance, and other features of the capitalistic system.[8] Aberhart's vision of a "Social Credit" society was far more advanced than that of Douglas, whose political economy did not extend much beyond getting rid of the so-called Jewish control over finance.

Soon Aberhart was featured at meetings of the leftist League for Social Reconstruction, the Canadian Labour Party, and the locals of the UFA organization. During the summer of 1933, while vacationing in Vancouver, Aberhart had a meeting with the leaders of the federal and provincial Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and agreed to joint efforts for the promotion of economic and social reform.

Through finely crafted radio plays, Aberhart satirized and lampooned the current capitalistic system. One serialized play, the main idea of which was borrowed from George Bernard Shaw, involved a mythical "Man from Mars" who analyzed Canada's economic and social system. The alien visitor was astounded at how poverty could exist in a world of plenty. Blame for the conditions was placed on the unidentified "fifty big-shots" who controlled the Canadian economy.

Those plays greatly increased Aberhart's radio audience, and he created Social Credit clubs around the province.[9] Aberhart was able to get easy access to the airwaves because his Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute held a chattel mortgage on CFCN. Soon over 350,000 people were listening to his Sunday afternoon broadcasts, which beat out the local ratings for the Jack Benny Show.

Aberhart sounded convincing to many of his listeners—they were indeed living in poverty—but neither his or Douglas's simplistic version of economics had any answer for the dust-bowl conditions caused by climatic change. The reality was that there was very little "plenty" in parts of the central regions of North America. Some years there were no crops to harvest, and farms were being abandoned across the prairie provinces.

Because of public pressure to implement Social Credit, the UFA government agreed to hold public hearings on Social Credit in the spring of 1934 and invited Douglas and Aberhart to appear before the Legislature. Afraid of Aberhart's popularity, the UFA leaders sought to trump his influence by driving a wedge between Douglas and Aberhart, thereby discrediting Aberhart. The plan worked, but only partially; Douglas repudiated Aberhart's version of his theories, and a shouting match occurred between the two men at the Mewata Armories in Calgary. However, the plan backfired because Aberhart appeared more knowledgeable and convincing than the celebrated Douglas, and the public rallied behind Aberhart.

During Douglas's appearance in Alberta, the fascist implications of his thought were seen. He dropped various hints that the only way his theories could be implemented was by military coup because Social Credit would be declared unconstitutional.[10] Aberhart sought to distance himself from Douglas's militarism, and he produced another pamphlet claiming that his version of Social Credit was entirely constitutional.[11]

As Aberhart continued to preach the "gospel" of Social Credit, he hoped that various existing political leaders would assume control of the movement and put Social Credit into power in Alberta. At this point in his life he did not appear to be seeking political office, although he had a large movement behind him. In letters to his niece and a friend in California, he commented that he was being drawn into political life, but he did not want it.[12] It is difficult to imagine Aberhart not wanting to retain control of the movement that he had started, but he offered the premiership to Dr. F.W. Gershaw, the Liberal member of Parliament for Medicine Hat, if he would take up the leadership.[13] Aberhart also hoped that the UFA would promote the cause, but it looked like they were not interested in doing so. By Christmas 1934 he was contemplating becoming Premier himself.[14]

However, public pressure for the UFA to adopt Social Credit continued to mount. The UFA leadership again tried to discredit Aberhart's movement by inviting him to speak at the 1935 annual UFA convention, held in January in Central United Church in Calgary. There the leadership of the UFA rejected his ideas as unworkable. As a final slap in the face to Aberhart, the provincial UFA government offered a lucrative contract to Major Douglas to be an economic adviser to the province.

At that point Aberhart decided to organize his own political party and contest the next election whenever it was called. He held Social Credit conventions in Calgary and Edmonton, created riding associations, and interviewed and selected candidates nominated by the Social Credit constituency associations. Sometimes he imposed his own choice of candidate from outside the list provided by the constituency associations. This action raised complaints that Aberhart was acting like a dictator.

With his able assistant, Ernest C. Manning, who had been his first graduate from the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, Aberhart barnstormed the province. He declared that the $25-a-month Social Credit dividends would be flowing within eighteen months. Other planks in his platform promised protection from bank foreclosures on homes, businesses, and farms; lower interest rates and lower taxes; new industries; increased employment; wage and price controls; better health care; and expanded women's rights.[15] The proposed Social Credit scheme would be run by a battery of non-elected "experts." In one broadcast he even hinted that the proposed monthly dividends could reach $75.[16]

As Aberhart became more engrossed in politics, the Calgary School Board became increasingly concerned about his possible dereliction of duties at Crescent Heights High School and hinted that he should resign. As in earlier conflicts, he ignored its warnings, although he did not miss any more days during the term.

After the election was called during the summer of 1935, Aberhart surprisingly did not run for office. He seems to have been testing the waters, not wanting to give up his lucrative position as a high school principal unless a Social Credit win was a "sure thing." Repeatedly he claimed that he was not seeking office. "I shall be more than pleased to have Major Douglas inaugurate it, once we have a Social Credit government in power… I have no desire for honor or high position."[17]

The Social Credit campaign took on the appearance of a religious crusade. The Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute was Aberhart's campaign headquarters, and his political speeches were filled with religious imagery, comparing himself to Moses, Daniel, and even Christ.

The campaign theme song was the hymn, "Oh God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come." In one of his pre-election broadcasts, he stated:

> I believe this whole movement, this whole crusade is of God. He is leading us into a new social order, a new era. He has chosen Canada, that country of virile, aggressive, God-fearing men and women to be leaders of the world; he has chosen Alberta, that great province nestling behind the shadow of the great and mighty Rockies, to be the leader of the province[s] of Canada. Failure to respond to the call of God in this matter will bring us chaos and confusion and sorrow."[illegible]

Throughout his campaign speeches, Aberhart howled at the "fifty-big-shots," the "sons of Satan," the "high-mucky-mucks," and other villains of eastern [central] Canada who were supposedly keeping Alberta people in poverty.

Aberhart's First Government

On August 22, 1935, Albertans went to the polls, and Aberhart's Social Credit movement won the provincial election with a landslide victory, capturing 57 of the 63 seats in the Legislature. The promised $25 Social Credit monthly dividend and a sex scandal involving former Premier Brownlee had destroyed the UFA. No UFA incumbent was left in the House. Aberhart was the new Premier without a seat. Few of Aberhart's caucus members had ever held public office before, and only John Hugill, who became attorney general, had a high public profile. The world was watching what would happen in Alberta. The international press, including *Pravda* from Moscow, had their reporters in Edmonton.

After all of his rhetoric on the ease by which Social Credit could be implemented, Aberhart found himself in deep waters on assuming office. He found the treasury almost empty. Many wealthy people and businesses had cashed in their provincial bonds and had transferred money out of the province, fearing socialistic confiscation by Aberhart's government. The situation was further complicated by many unemployed people drifting into the province, hoping to cash in on the promised dividends.

Aberhart hardly knew where to start. What followed was unprecedented in Canadian provincial and federal politics. Major Douglas was still under contract to the Alberta government, so Aberhart immediately wired him, saying, "Victorious. When can you come?" Douglas appeared hesitant to come and had no startling advice to offer. Instead, he fired missives across the Atlantic Ocean. It almost looked as if the people of Alberta were going to be governed by offshore telegrams.[illegible]

In the meantime, Aberhart had a financial disaster on his hands. He made a hasty trip to Ottawa to see his personal friend, Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, for a federal loan to keep Alberta afloat. Bennett was the MP for Calgary, and he and Aberhart had worked together on the temperance campaign, educational matters, and League of Nations Society events. Bennett released some funds necessary to keep Alberta from declaring bankruptcy until the coming federal election, but warned that further funds would require the involvement of a federal loan council in management of Alberta's affairs.

Aberhart also met with bankers in Toronto. Upon hearing of this, Douglas wired back,

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Premier William Aberhart, 1935.

warning him against involvement with Bennett's plans. He was also enraged when Aberhart hired Robert J. Magor, a Montreal financier, as an economic advisor who had been recommended to him by one of John Hugill's friends.

While in Ontario Aberhart made a side trip to Detroit, hoping to see Henry Ford, who dabbled in unorthodox economics. Aberhart was not able to see Ford, but did have a meeting with the Reverend Father Charles Coughlin, a Canadian-born Catholic priest who was spreading Social Credit teaching. Coughlin would later be censured by his church for his promotion of fascism and anti-Semitism. From Detroit Aberhart traveled to his hometown of Seaforth and told the people there that conditions on the prairies had been so bad that he had almost become a Communist. "I became 'pink' and by that I mean tinging close to 'red.'" He explained that a revolution could be avoided by adopting Social Credit.[20]

Once he was back in Alberta, Aberhart set about reorganizing the province along Social Credit lines. The civil service was purged of people that Aberhart felt could not be trusted because of their past political ties. Their positions were filled by Social Credit supporters. In October 1935 Aberhart ran in a by-election for Okotoks-High River; a seat had been vacated so that he could enter the Legislature. Aberhart seems to have chosen that riding because if he won it he would become the MLA for the Prince of Wales (Prince Edward had his famous EP Ranch near High River). Aberhart easily won the by-election and was able to take his seat in the House.

Besides being Premier, Aberhart was minister of Education. The Aberharts sold their upper-middle class Calgary home that backed onto Mount Royal and moved into the Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton. Giving up her Calgary home was a hardship for Jessie Aberhart, and hotel living created considerable tension in their marriage. Manning and several other members of Aberhart's Cabinet lived down the hall. When in Calgary the Aberharts stayed in a suite at the Palliser Hotel.

Even while he was Premier, Aberhart continued to run his religious empire. On alternate weeks Aberhart and his protégé Ernest Manning traveled to Calgary to direct the affairs of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, and the Legislature Building became a branch office of the Institute. Government secretaries handled Aberhart's vast religious correspondence that came from many corners of the globe. In his mind there seemed to be no separation between church and state.

During his first months in office, Aberhart was inundated by various economic quacks who sought to offer him their own Social Credit advice. One of Aberhart's first international guests was the Reverend Hewlett Johnston, the "Red" Dean of Canterbury. Johnston had been promoting Social Credit as well as being an apologist for Stalin. Aberhart had Johnston preach from his pulpit in Calgary and also took him on a visit to Prince Edward's EP Ranch. Another early visitor was H.B. Brougham, who claimed to be Major Douglas's official representative in the United States. Aberhart had met Brougham on the trip to Detroit, and Brougham came to Edmonton on his own volition, but claimed that Aberhart had invited him. Aberhart and Brougham quickly fell out after Brougham tried to dictate to him.

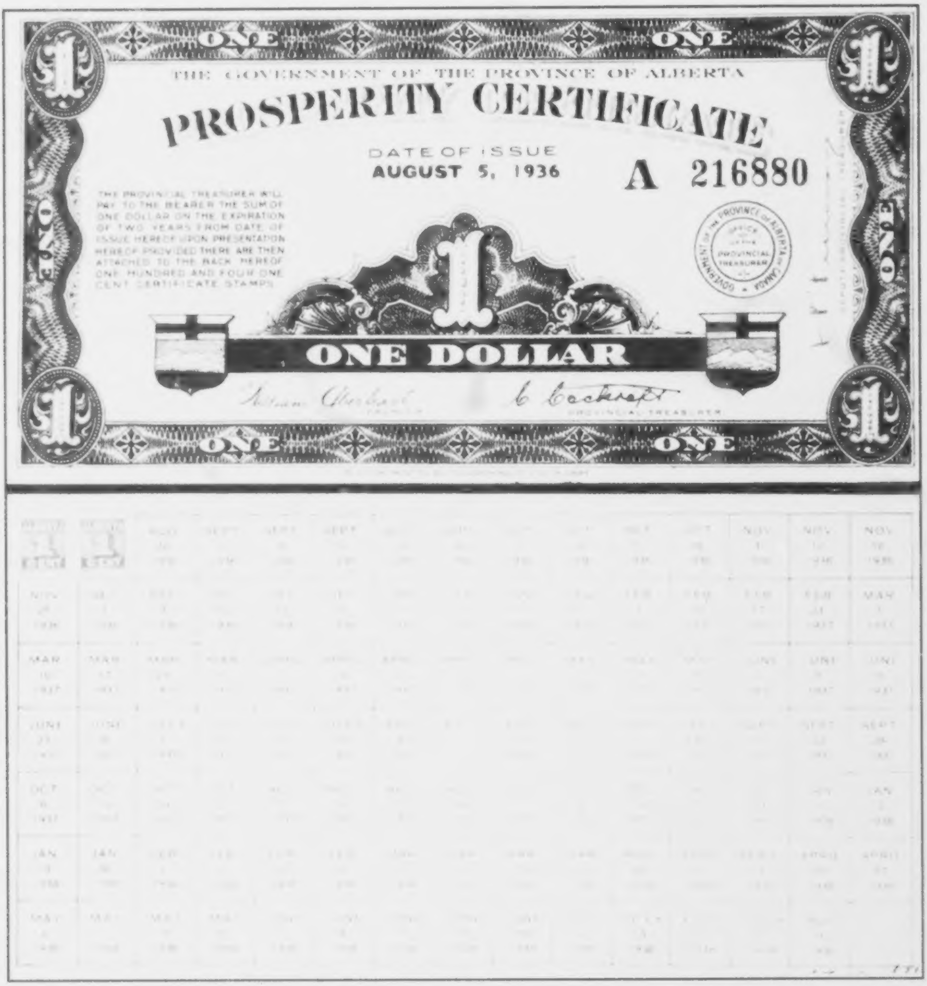
In the 1935 federal campaign, Aberhart tried to block Social Credit attempts to unseat R.B. Bennett from his Calgary seat. Bennett kept his seat, but lost the federal election. Aberhart now had to deal with the new Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, who refused to loan Alberta needed funds unless the loan council plans were implemented. This Aberhart refused to do. In April 1936 Alberta defaulted on its bond payments. About the same time, Aberhart's government passed recall legislation so that any politician not doing his or her job would lose his or her seat in the House if a significant percentage of voters in the constituency signed a recall petition. This legislation would later backfire on Aberhart.

As a former teacher and now minister of Education, Aberhart had long wanted to reform the education system. Now he had his chance. In 1936 he awarded teachers professional status, standardized the curriculum across the province, and created larger school districts, taking away power from local officials. These educational measures had been considered by the earlier UFA government, but had not been introduced. Aberhart brooked no opposition while pushing through these reforms as minister of Education. Partially fulfilling his promised program of state medicare, he also established a tuberculosis sanatorium in central Alberta and offered free treatment for bona fide Alberta citizens who were suffering from the malady.

Much of the other legislation of 1936 was aimed at establishing provincial control over all aspects of the economy. All trades and businesses were licensed. Minimum wages were raised, and minimum prices for goods were set in order to ensure the economic welfare of producers. Maximum prices were contemplated in order to ensure that consumers could afford necessities. These measures were in preparation for the state-controlled economy that Aberhart had painted in his earlier Social Credit pamphlets.

Ernest C. Manning, who had no prior business experience other than managing the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, was put in charge of trade and industry. Manning was given discretion over who received business licenses. Complaints were raised that licenses were being denied to those who opposed Social Credit and to some of those who belonged to Asian minorities.

This legislation was still a far cry from the economic paradise of Social Credit that Aberhart had promised. Without any plan from Major Douglas, who had now broken off contact, Aberhart was at loose ends to come up with a Social Credit plan. He took on



ONE ONE

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA

PROSPERITY CERTIFICATE

DATE OF ISSUE
AUGUST 5, 1936

A 216880

THE PROVINCIAL TREASURER WILL PAY TO THE BEARER THE SUM OF ONE DOLLAR ON THE EXPIRATION OF TWO YEARS FROM DATE OF ISSUE HEREOF UPON PRESENTATION HEREOF PROVIDED THERE ARE THEN ATTACHED TO THE BACK HEREOF ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR ONE CENT CERTIFICATE STAMPS

ONE DOLLAR

William Aberhart
PREMIER

C Cockroft
PROVINCIAL TREASURER

ONE ONE

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Prosperity Certificate, 1936. The front of the certificate appears above. On the back (below), there was space to affix the weekly stamp.

another advisor, E.G. Woodward from Vancouver, who encouraged him to implement "prosperity certificates." This plan involved depreciating currency, modelled after a short-lived scheme that had been tried by Silvio Gesell after a coup in Munich in 1919. Aberhart wanted to issue the prosperity certificates as the Social Credit "dividend" payments, but Woodward said that it was economically impossible to do so immediately. Aberhart soon fired Woodward, but kept his outline plan for the prosperity certificates.

During the summer of 1936, the Alberta government issued prosperity certificates as its own currency, bearing Aberhart's signature. Popularly called "funny money," this currency required stamps to be affixed on the reverse side each week in order for it to remain valid.

It was hoped that people would spend their money rather than have to buy the stamps for the new week, thus stimulating the economy and also bringing taxation revenue into the treasury. The stamps to keep each $1.00 note valid would create $1.04 in revenue over a two-year period, a claw-back of 52% per annum.

This special Alberta currency was given out to unemployment relief recipients, civil servants, and members of the Legislature. The plan had really nothing to do with Social Credit theory in either the Douglas or Aberhart variations, but it was expected that the promised Social Credit dividends would also be paid in prosperity certificates. In anticipation of the promised dividends, all citizens and business persons (including farmers) within the province were required to sign pledges stating their loyalty to the Aberhart government. This requirement was unprecedented in Canadian political history. On the forms people had to disclose all of their assets and liabilities. Some people rushed back to the province from their out-of-province holidays to sign up, fearing that they would lose their civil rights and their property. The fine print on the forms stated that any travel outside of the province for more than one month would require the written permission of the director of the yet-to-be organized State Credit House.

There was a lot of apprehension in the air because the province could impose severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods. Under the plan, the prosperity certificates would eventually become the currency of Alberta. Canadian currency would be held only by the provincial government, to be issued at the government's will to businesses wanting to pay out-of-province bills. People and businesses out of favour with Social Credit could find themselves severely limited in their access to Canadian currency.

The "funny money" scheme lasted only a few months. It failed because many MLAs refused to accept the Alberta currency for their salaries, various government departments would not accept it for payments, and the government had not prepared mechanisms by which merchants could redeem it for Canadian currency in order to pay out-of-province suppliers.

As Aberhart appeared to be hopelessly floundering, he attracted much negative criticism from the press, and he responded in kind. As a result, the *Calgary Herald* hired a local cartoonist, Stewart Cameron, who had been working for the Walt Disney Studios on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Aberhart's rotund form, heavy jowls, and bald head were a cartoonist's dream. Cameron returned to Calgary and for the rest of Aberhart's career depicted him daily in the most unflattering ways, often in the likeness of Hitler and Mussolini. As a way of getting better press coverage, Aberhart persuaded his followers to purchase the *Calgary Albertan* and make that daily a party organ. This they did, but the venture ended up an economic failure, with a great loss to the rank-and-file Social Credit investors.

In the fall of 1936, Aberhart had a visit from another Social Credit "expert," John Hargrave, who had once been a leader in the Boy Scout movement and a potential successor to Baden Powell. Hargrave had set up another "woodsy" youth movement called the Kindred of the Kibbo Kift, which influenced the Hitler Youth. Hargrave had mixed Social Credit thought into the Kibbo Kift organization and renamed it the Green Shirts after their green military-style uniform, but he no longer had Major Douglas's blessing after Douglas perceived him as a rival. Douglas even broke his silence to warn Aberhart about Hargrave's leadership designs on Alberta. It is not surprising that Aberhart and Hargrave did not get along, and Hargrave soon left, but not before he had stirred up unrest within the caucus because of Aberhart's inaction in implementing Social Credit. Hargrave had denounced the prosperity certificate scheme as having nothing to do with Social Credit, and he pointed out that Aberhart had no idea how to implement Social Credit.

A group of dissident caucus members began meeting privately in Edmonton's Corona Hotel to try to force Aberhart to introduce Social Credit. Fred Kennedy, a veteran reporter for the *Calgary Herald*, discovered this brewing revolt and was soon invited to its private meetings.[21] The political unrest was not limited to the backbenchers. Very soon a Cabinet member, C.C. Ross, the minister of Lands and Mines, resigned, and there were rumours of more resignations.

As the revolt grew, an incident weakened the revolters' faith in Aberhart's trustworthiness and truthfulness. He had made arrangements to go to England in 1937 to attend the Coronation and speak at several venues. When it was learned that the government was about to spend a considerable amount for his trip, backbenchers objected to this unnecessary excursion while the citizens of Alberta were in poverty. Over his radio broadcast and in letters, Aberhart denied that he had made any such plans. However, his correspondence with various people in central Canada and Britain clearly shows that he had made concrete plans to go to England and conduct a speaking tour.

The disgruntled backbenchers were able to force Aberhart's hand in March of 1937. The eighteen months were up. Aberhart had not fulfilled his promise of the monthly $25 dividends, and they blamed him for not working with Major Douglas. The backbenchers were prepared to defeat their own government on a money bill unless Aberhart gave in to their demands. Aberhart seemed powerless in the face of the caucus revolt.

He was forced to agree to turn the control of the government over to a five-man Social Credit Board, composed of four Douglasites and one loyalist, Floyd Baker. This situation was unprecedented in the constitutional history of Canada. The Social Credit Board was given weighty and extensive powers to implement Social Credit in Alberta and give orders to the Cabinet.

The Social Credit Board immediately sought to bring Major Douglas to Alberta. Still suspicious of Aberhart's abiding presence, Douglas hesitated to come, but sought to advise from afar. As well, he sent two of his own representatives, George Powell and L.D. Byrne, to direct the Social Credit Board. They arrived in June 1937 and set Alberta on a legal and constitutional roller coaster.

Powell and Byrne began by holding Social Credit indoctrination classes for the members of the Legislature. They also arranged for the Social Credit Board to circulate new loyalty forms to replace the earlier loyalty covenants in anticipation of the dividends. The Social Credit Board was aided in the circulation of these "Blue Pledges" by members of the Alberta Communist Party, which was supporting any challenge to the existing economic system.

In the fall of 1937, the Alberta government passed radical legislation drafted by Powell and Byrne. The Social Credit Board was given power to take over the control of all banks within the province, and to remove all civil rights of bank employees who would not comply with the new legislation. A bill was also passed preventing any Alberta laws from being challenged in the courts. The press and critics cried out that this was "Hitler legislation."

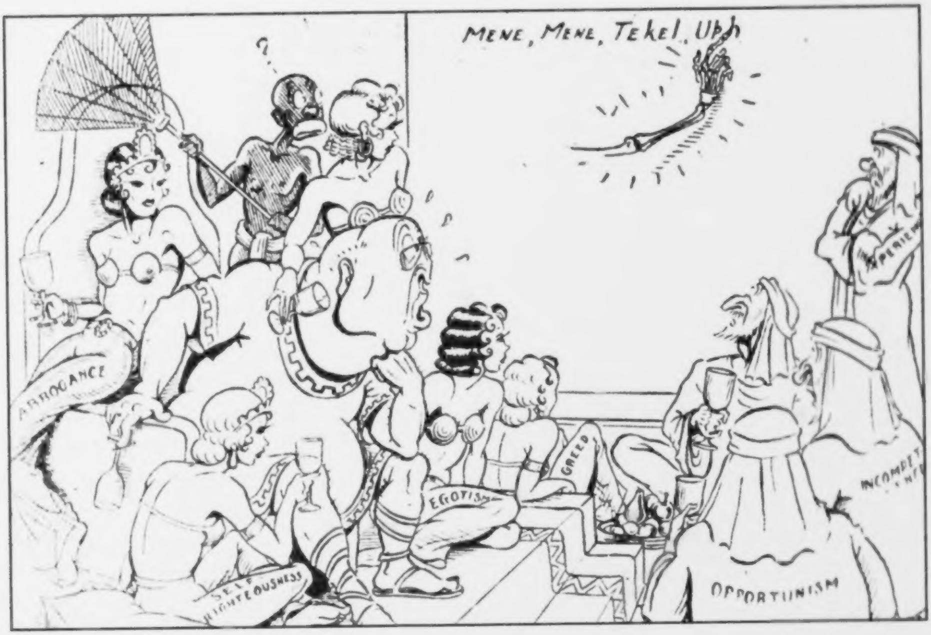
Attorney general John Hugill, a lawyer with impressive credentials and social standing, refused to support the legislation when it was presented to the lieutenant-governor, and Aberhart forced him to resign his Cabinet post. Aberhart, who taken some American correspondence law courses years before, assumed the portfolio of attorney general. For his part, Hugill bolted from the government, crossed the floor, and went on the attack, writing and speaking out on the unconstitutionality of the Alberta government's actions.

In short order the federal government disallowed Alberta's controversial legislation as being *ultra vires*—beyond the province's constitutional jurisdiction. One of Major Douglas's first responses was to wire Powell and Byrne to cancel the contract of the RCMP as the provincial police force because he saw the Mounties as an arm of the federal government. Applications for an Alberta Social Credit police force were now being received. Many critics of Aberhart began to warn against the "Gestapo" potential of this move.

More legislation introduced in the fall of 1937 was equally radical and revealed the paranoid thinking of the Douglasites who controlled the Social Credit Board. They accepted Douglas's belief about a gigantic Jewish conspiracy behind the economic problems. The front line of that conspiracy was represented in the banks and the press. Therefore, those institutions were attacked directly by the Social Credit Board, which was taking dictation from Douglas, and it drafted legislation accordingly. The Bank Taxation Bill sought to impose taxes on bank capital and reserves. The Credit of Alberta Regulation Bill placed all financial institutions in Alberta under the direction of the Social Credit Board. The Accurate News and Information Bill placed several restrictions on the press and imposed severe fines and jail sentences on newspaper editors who would not comply. Newspapers would be forced to reveal all of their sources and publish the names and addresses of all writers of articles, editorials, and letters to the editor. Pieces by black-listed writers could not be published. Newspapers would also have to print free of charge any government rebuttals to criticism. Lieutenant-Governor John Bowen refused to sign these three pieces of legislation and sent them to the governor general for consideration. This was the first time in Alberta's history that a lieutenant-governor had withheld his approval of bills, and they were eventually declared *ultra vires*.

The Social Credit government's frontal attack on the press created a giant storm. Almost all of Alberta's daily and weekly newspapers resisted the proposed restrictions upon them. As a result of their combined opposition, they were later awarded the Pulitzer Prize for freedom of the press in 1938.

Equally controversial was the repeal in 1937 of the Recall Act, the first law passed by the Aberhart government. Aberhart's own constituents of Okotoks-High River had become very disgruntled with Aberhart's failure to keep his promises. Even though he had made trips out of Edmonton every second weekend, he usually went to Calgary where he conducted the affairs of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute. His constituents saw little of him. When they got the required 67% of signatures to recall Aberhart, Aberhart



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A cartoon in the October 2, 1937, issue of the Calgary Daily Herald, *satirizing Aberhart's moves toward censorship of the press. The caption reads "Belshazzar weighs the possibilities of a press control law." The portly Belshazzar, of course, represents Premier Aberhart.*

disregarded the signatures, claiming that people had been coerced into signing the petition against him by the major oil companies operating around Turner Valley. The repeal of the Recall Act saved Aberhart's seat in the House, but not his reputation.

Much of the steam had been taken out of the Social Credit Board by the federal disallowance of Alberta legislation. A further blow to its radical plans occurred after an anonymous pamphlet appeared on the desks of the Legislature, referring to certain high-profile opposition politicians and lawyers as "banker's toadies" and calling for their extermination. The pamphlet purported to come from the "United Democrats"—a non-existent body—but it was soon traced to the Social Credit Board. Charges were laid against its authors George Powell, Douglas's representative, and Joe Unwin, the party whip and a member of the Social Credit Board. They were charged with seditious libel and counselling to murder. Aberhart found himself in the awkward position of supporting Powell and Unwin at the same time that he was attorney general, supposedly upholding the law. After Aberhart withdrew the provincial prosecutor, the judge appointed a private prosecutor, and they were convicted of criminal libel. They were sent to the Fort Saskatchewan Penitentiary to serve hard time.

Powell and Unwin did not spent much time in prison. Hoping to win votes in Alberta, Prime Minister Mackenzie King gave Powell early prison release in 1938. Powell was then deported back to England; Unwin's release was publicly celebrated by Social Creditors and members of the Communist Party, again signifying the leftist connections of Aberhart's government.

Aberhart's fight with the federal government continued as the Supreme Court declared more of Alberta's economic and banking legislation unconstitutional.[22] In 1938 Aberhart retaliated by closing Government House, the official residence of the lieutenant-governor, and taking away his official car and secretary, forcing him to depend on the motor and secretarial pools. Aberhart was also caught up in a scandal involving his own official car, a specially built Buick limousine. When news leaked out that he had personally ordered this vehicle, some of the public were outraged. Again over the religious broadcast he denied that the government had bought the car. When it was pointed out to him that the limousine was sitting in the government garage, he limply replied that the government had not paid for it yet. Aberhart's limo would appear prominently in several of Stewart Cameron's cartoons.

After Powell had been deported, Douglas's other agent, L.D. Byrne, continued to manage the Social Credit Board and advise Aberhart. Bryne's conspiratorial worldview continued to influence to a great degree the radical legislation that was subsequently created and the anti-Semitic propaganda that appeared in government publications.[23]

As a move towards breaking the control of the banks and in order to establish the State Credit House envisioned in the "Yellow Pamphlet," the Alberta government created the Alberta Treasury Branches in 1938. Treasury Branches did provide "banking" facilities in many small communities that had lost their banks because of earlier closures, but the Treasury Branches never seriously challenged the existence of the chartered banks in the province. Besides offering banking services, the Treasury Branches served as remote government offices and propaganda centres.

Of far more importance for Alberta's economy was the creation of the Oil and Gas Conservation Board. A tremendous amount of energy was lost as the oil companies burned off natural gas. Aberhart's government saw natural gas as a valuable commodity that should be conserved and used. This legislation was unpopular with the energy companies, but its regulations and taxation measures did more to improve Alberta's economy than all of the "Social Credit" legislation.

Almost three and a half years had passed since Aberhart had entered the Legislature. It was not until February 1939 that he made his "maiden" speech in the House. Aberhart was not a man willing to debate and felt that his real audience was the people whom he addressed over his weekly religious broadcasts. Aberhart still had a vast radio audience. That year over 9,000 children across North America received correspondence lessons from his Radio Sunday School.

Later in 1939 he created the Provincial Marketing Board to regulate all aspects of the processing, transportation, and distribution of natural products within the province. This Board was placed under the control of Aberhart's friend, Charles R. Pearce, who was a member of the board of directors of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute.

Also in 1939 Aberhart spent much time organizing and hosting the royal visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. As Aberhart planned Alberta's reception for the royals, he had ongoing conflicts with the lieutenant-governor, whom he tried to exclude from the events. Awed by the monarchy, Aberhart suggested to the King that His Majesty was the biological descendant of the biblical King David.

While the royal visit was occupying Aberhart's time, there was another serious revolt at the Bible Institute Baptist Church in Calgary. Similar to what had happened in 1929, the congregation was having difficulty finding ministers who could accept Aberhart's eccentric theology and overbearing leadership. An American minister, Ralph C. Crouse, who had been hired by the church, seriously objected to Aberhart's theology, politics, and control over the affairs of the church. Crouse took his complaints to the *Calgary Herald*; it was only too glad to publish them. Crouse soon quit his position and set up another church, taking a number of the long-standing but disgruntled members of the Bible Institute Baptist Church with him.

After Canada entered World War II, Aberhart faced some major restrictions on his radio broadcasts. They lost their folksy appeal and were no longer live. He was forced to submit his sermons to military censors before they were broadcast from the studio of CFCN. It was felt that he might be inadvertently passing along secret enemy codes when he announced personal messages to and from members of his radio audience. Members of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute had to listen to him from a radio speaker mounted on the stage. His use of radio dramas was also restricted, perhaps indicating how effective they were regarded in making social and economic commentary.

World War II essentially brought an end to the implementation of "Social Credit" economics in Alberta. Such plans were put on hold, and Aberhart began to focus on trying to get Social Credit implemented federally. For a short time he teamed up with W.D. Herridge, a former Canadian ambassador to Washington, who had formed the New Democracy Movement. Federal Social Creditors adopted the New Democracy Party label. However, Aberhart and Herridge soon fell out over personality and ideological issues. Herridge was never a convert to the Social Credit theories, and he wanted the federal government to impose military conscription. Aberhart did not want conscription unless wealth was also conscripted. When Herridge failed to win a seat in the 1940 federal election, that was the death-knell of their relationship and the New Democracy Party. Federal Social Crediters soon reverted to their original party name.

Aberhart was also experiencing revolt among some of the provincial members of his party. In February 1940 four members of his caucus crossed the floor and sat as Independent Progressives. They included former provincial treasurer Charles Cockroft, S.A.G. Barnes, and two former insurgents, A.L. Blue and A.E. MacLellan. Barnes accused Aberhart of running a dictatorship and called for "open government." Cockroft openly challenged the viability of any Social Credit economic scheme, whether from Douglas or Aberhart, and laid the defaulting of Alberta bonds squarely on Aberhart's refusal to co-operate with the federal government because of his conspiratorial obsessions.[4]

During the Throne Speech debate of 1940, the ineptitude of Aberhart's government was further revealed. David Duggan, the leader of the Conservative Party, was able to show the bungling of the government in trying to refinance its debt of $150 million. In 1938 it had signed an agreement with an unknown underwriter, J.J. Sousa, to buy up Alberta bonds below par. Sousa had ties to the New York banking firm of Koen, Loeb, and

Company, ironically a firm that Social Credit literature had listed as part of the giant conspiracy.[25] Upon obtaining the defaulted bonds, the Alberta government would then issue a new series of bonds worth $150 million to mature 45 years later. For their services the underwriters would receive a share of the new bonds. The deal never materialized, but the Alberta government had paid some of Sousa's travelling expenses. At first Aberhart's government tried to deny Duggan's charges, but the Conservative leader was able to produce a copy of Sousa's contract with the Alberta government.

Aberhart's Second Term and Political Decline

Later in March 1940 Albertans went to the polls for the provincial election. As in 1935 Aberhart was better organized than his opponents, but after the problems that he had experienced in the Okotoks-High River riding, Aberhart chose to run in a safer riding in Calgary. As in 1935 an advisory committee selected Social Credit candidates and even imposed its own choices on certain ridings. Even though he was more limited in his use of radio facilities under the War Measures Act, Aberhart's broadcasts were still effective as he poured vitriol on his "enemies":

> It will take more than all the money the big-shots can pour into this election or the most ridiculous cartoons some moron can conceive; it will take more than the most unscrupulous lying, whispering campaigns the minds of depraved reprobates can devise to wheedle the votes out of these mothers, wives, and daughters who know these things. Yes, this is your friend Aberhart. I am determined to bring home to the money powers, whose stool-pidgeoning lawyers are listening and making dictaphone records of what I say: this is Aberhart telling the enemies of the people a few cold truths.[26]

During the election Aberhart even suggested that Social Credit dividends might reach $100 per month. His party again won the election, but with a much-reduced majority, winning only 36 seats and 43% of the popular vote.

In 1941 Aberhart joined two other Premiers, Duff Pattullo of British Columbia and Mitch Hepburn of Ontario, to derail the acceptance of the Rowell-Sirois Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations at the Premiers' conference. He saw the recommendations of the Commission as a power grab by Ottawa and part of the international conspiracy.

As Aberhart's plans failed one after another, he felt oppressed by outside forces. He felt even more harassed when, after he had been selected to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta in 1941, the Senate vetoed it on the grounds that Aberhart's religious and political views were an embarrassment to the university. After that honour had been announced and then was withdrawn at the last minute, Aberhart felt it as a public humiliation. The Alberta Teachers' Federation came to Aberhart's defense and claimed that his lengthy career as an educator and minister of Education entitled him to the degree.

As Aberhart faced opposition on almost all sides, he attempted to strengthen the federal Social Credit movement. He and some federal Social Credit members of Parliament tried to repackage Social Credit as the Democratic Monetary Reform Organization (DMRO). In October 1941 they held a convention at the Malborough Hotel in Winnipeg, with Aberhart being the featured speaker. At the DMRO convention they drew up a ten-point manifesto on monetary reform to be associated with post-war reconstruction. Aberhart organized two grassroots movements for the DMRO: the Fisherman's Club and the Democratic Victory League. Not surprisingly the Fisherman's Club mixed economic principles with Christianity.[illegible] As Aberhart turned his attention to the federal scene, he began to take French lessons and toured the country, trying to build up the Social Credit movement in other provinces, including in Quebec and British Columbia.

As Aberhart faced opposition at home and from Ottawa, he grew increasingly conspiratorial and intellectually irrational. He began putting more credence in the eccentric beliefs of the British-Israelites, who believed that the British peoples were the 10 Lost Tribes of Israel and that Britain had a divine destiny. Aberhart also put a greater faith in numerology, an occult practice that attached numerical significance to letters. Words of the same numerical value had a special convergence in the minds of British-Israelites. British-Israel themes and numerology became more prominent in Aberhart's broadcasts and correspondence.[illegible] It seems as if he was dabbling in the occult as a means of seeking confirmation for the rightness of his cause. However, Aberhart's British-Israel views soon alienated the French-Canadian Social Credit members in Manitoba and Quebec. The new DMRO soon died, and federal Social Credit MPs again reverted to their original party name.

Aberhart continued to think and write about post-war reconstruction, but he would not see post-war days. For some time he had been suffering from liver cancer and was not well. The workaholic pace, the stress and lack of sleep had taken their toll. His health problems were kept private, but close observers noticed that Aberhart's fire was gone, and he appeared to be a tired old man. From 1942 onward he spent considerable time at the west coast visiting his daughters. He died in Vancouver on May 23, 1943, and was buried in Burnaby, BC.

Conclusion

Aberhart's legacy in Alberta is to be found in his reforms to education, health care, and the energy sector. Those reforms had nothing to do with Social Credit *per se*, but they greatly benefited the province. Almost all of his unique "Social Credit" legislation was disallowed by the federal government or overturned by the Privy Council in Britain. His obsession with economic conspiracy theories was largely responsible for the defaulting on the Alberta bonds.

Still, many people looked at Aberhart as their economic saviour because his legislation against foreclosures of farms and homes (although eventually overturned) gave many farmers and homeowners financial breathing space until the economy improved. However, the promised $25 dividends never materialized.

Aberhart was elected to office in part because of the desperate economic times and his own charisma. He was the first Canadian politician to recognize the potential for radio broadcasting, and he used it very effectively. His political dramas, presented live and over the airwaves, were satirical masterpieces.

The eight years that Aberhart spent in office as Premier of Alberta were indeed colourful. Not only was he controversial, but he attracted a parade of international economic eccentrics who were constantly entering the province in the hopes of having Aberhart adopt their wild schemes. Aberhart was exceedingly authoritarian, and had not it been for the federal government's preventing his government's radical legislation on banking, property, and civil rights, Alberta could have easily developed into a fascist state, taking directions from the anti-Semitic Major Douglas. Douglas already had had a considerable influence on the direction of Aberhart's government. Stewart Cameron sensed this deeply and tried to warn Albertans through his political cartoons. A number of high-ranking British Social Creditors, including the Duke of Bedford, were in active contact with Hitler's government. Even home-grown Canadian fascists were seeing Aberhart as a potential ally.

William Aberhart was an enigmatic character. He seems to have entered the political arena for altruistic reasons; he desperately wanted to help people who were suffering during the Depression, but as in his other spheres of influence, his altruism soon became dominated by his egotism. In the political realm he exhibited the same dictatorial characteristics that had earlier been manifested in his school teaching and religious activities.

Notes

1. For a more comprehensive treatment of William Aberhart, readers should consult David R. Elliott and Iris Miller, *Bible Bill: A Biography of William Aberhart* (Edmonton: Reidmore Books, 1987), and David R. Elliott (ed.), *Aberhart: Outpourings and Replies* (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 1991).
2. David R. Elliott, "Aberhart: Right or Left?" in D. Francis and H. Ganzevoort (eds.), *The Dirty Thirties in Prairie Canada* (Vancouver: Tantalus Research Limited, 1980), 11–31.
3. See Elliott and Miller, *Bible Bill.*
4. Maurice Colbourne, *Unemployment or War* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928).
5. C.H. Douglas, *Social Credit* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1924), 30.
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Ernest Manning 1943-1968

EDWARD BELL

Ernest C. Manning, 1943–1968

Introduction

At Ernest Manning's funeral, the officiating pastors wore suits, not vestments and clerical collars. It was a fitting representation of his life, much of which was spent outside the bounds of conventionality and long-established tradition. In religion as in politics, his life was characterized by a rejection of entrenched organizations and orthodox ideas.

Manning's political career began in the early 1930s when he adopted the Social Credit philosophy of his close friend and mentor, William Aberhart. It ended, at least officially, with his retirement from the Canadian Senate in 1983. In his half-century in public life, particularly in his 25 years as Premier of Alberta, Manning directed the transformation of the province from a mainly rural, hardscrabble, and sometimes desperate domain into an affluent, dynamic, and largely urban province. But he was not able to mould Alberta exactly as he wanted. In fact he himself was transfigured in the process, being shaped by events and realities beyond his control.

Manning's political metamorphosis resulted in part from the fact that he was in government so long that he had to contend with a sequence of very different social conditions. As his career ran its course, Alberta experienced severe economic depression, war, stagnation, and eventually economic boom. The laws of the land also placed constraints on what he was able to do: much of the Social Credit legislation that he helped to produce was declared *ultra vires* by the courts. And like any other political neophyte, he faced a fairly steep learning curve once he found himself in a position of power. Yet his political trajectory is best understood not as a change of direction so much as a simplification, a letting go of unworkable policies while retaining the same basic philosophy of life.

In the Beginning

Ernest Charles Manning was born in Carnduff, Saskatchewan, in 1908, of English immigrant parents. The next year his family moved to a homestead near Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Growing up with two brothers on the Rosetown farm, Manning developed a mischievous sense of humour and learned to play the violin, offering his talents at local parties. He finished his formal schooling at grade eight, a not uncommon practice for farm boys in that era. After leaving school he led a rather listless existence, doing family farm chores and working part-time as a hired hand, pondering his future.

Living his entire life in two land-locked provinces, Manning developed a fascination for yachts, ships, and the sea. In later years he would love to take vacations to the oceanside, and he accumulated a substantial collection of books on boats and ships. The young Manning also developed an interest in all things mechanical, another fascination he would maintain throughout his life. As a boy he was an avid reader of *Popular Mechanics* and loved to tinker with automobiles and farm machinery.[1] Many years later, after he had retired from provincial politics, the E.C. Manning Awards Foundation was established by various people in the private sector to provide financial awards to Canadians (including students) who develop new technologies. According to his son Preston, Manning got more satisfaction from this honour than from many of the other accolades he had received.[2]

Manning's love of technology included an interest in electronics, especially the new and wildly popular medium of radio. In 1925 he took the money he had saved from doing farm work and placed a mail order for a radio set, massive roof antenna and all. It proved to be a fateful acquisition as shortly thereafter he was tuning in to station CFCN in Calgary, which carried William Aberhart's religious broadcasts. Although the Manning family were not known to be uncommonly religious, young Ernest was soon captivated by the firebrand Aberhart's radio ministry and made a lifelong commitment to Christ. The conversion experience "brought about a complete transformation in my life," he remarked years later. "My interests changed; my outlook on life changed. And one of the first very major differences in outlook that came about as a result of that personal acceptance of Christ was an almost insatiable desire to know more of the Scriptures."[3] At this point in his life, Manning would stay up until one or two in the morning reading the Bible by coal-oil lamp, and then get up at six to spend the day on the farm driving the tractor.

Manning took a short trip to Calgary to meet Aberhart and was baptised by him.[4] At the time, the fundamentalist lay preacher had little indication that the shy, awkward, skinny kid in the ill-fitting suit (another mail-order acquisition) would soon become his religious and political protégé. Manning returned to Alberta in the fall of 1927 to attend the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, which had recently been established by Aberhart and his followers.

To many people's surprise, Manning's unprepossessing exterior proved to be deceptive, hiding a supple, analytical mind and an iron will. He was the first graduate of the Institute's three-year program and over time developed a strong rapport with Aberhart, eventually becoming secretary of the Institute and moving into the Aberhart household. The Calgary evangelist was 30 years Manning's senior and had two adult daughters, but no sons. The older man was known to remark that if he had a son he would want him to be like Ernest Manning.[5] The quasi-familial relationship between the two men was solidified at Manning's wedding some years later when Aberhart "gave away" the bride, a young student-musician from the Institute who also saw Aberhart as a father figure.

Manning had found his calling and had begun to preach the gospel under the auspices of the Institute, but this was hardly an auspicious beginning for a future Premier. Neither he nor his mentor were particularly interested in politics; there was no hint that 50 years of political struggle and achievement lay ahead. But that was before the Depression.

Within a few short years of the Wall Street crash, the worldwide economic crisis hit Alberta hard. The net income per farm in Alberta dropped from $1,975 in 1927 to only $54 in 1933.[6] In Calgary and Edmonton the unemployment rate soared to about 25%, and those lucky enough to find work had to settle for very low wages. Teachers' salaries were drastically reduced and in some jurisdictions could not be paid; in some rural areas, doctors' fees were paid in produce. In the hardest-hit regions, in particular those farming districts suffering from extreme drought, stories of people eating gophers and making clothing and other household items out of flour sacks became legendary. "Relief," the social assistance of the day, was meagre and in some cases required the recipient to perform hard labour. And to take a "handout" in the 1930s was a humiliation, an admission of defeat.

Poverty was compounded by debt. In the 15 years preceding the Depression, times had been fairly prosperous, and the banks had openly encouraged farmers and other entrepreneurs to take out loans. Plummeting prices for farm produce, low wages, and unemployment often made it impossible for people to make regular loan payments, which created tension between debtors and the banks. The provincial government itself was locked into a debt problem: half of its revenues in the mid-1930s went to debt payments.

The material conditions were bad enough, but the deepest wounds were probably psychological. Aberhart, who was a high school principal as well as an evangelist, was besieged with distraught people asking for help and begging him to do something about the Depression. Many of his best high school students could not find jobs after graduating, and one of his favourites committed suicide, unable to cope with his family's destitution.[7] Other promising students dropped out of school and left home to look for work after their fathers lost their jobs, believing that their families could no longer care for them. Hearts were heavy in the countryside as well, where years of futility reduced some hard-bitten farmers to tears. Aberhart felt for these people and believed it to be his Christian duty to help them.[8]

In 1932, after reading Maurice Colbourne's *Unemployment or War*, a book based on the Social Credit principles of C.H. Douglas, Aberhart decided that Social Credit was the answer to Alberta's, and the world's, problems. According to Douglas, there was never enough money in circulation to buy up all the goods and services available in the economy. There were plenty of goods to go around, he claimed, but they could not be distributed properly because of a faulty monetary system. "Social Credit" must be issued to make up the discrepancy between the value of all goods and services available and the purchasing power in the hands of consumers. Douglas also believed in "the supremacy of the individual … over any external interest,"[9] but claimed that an organized conspiracy, formed by the world's top bankers, international communists, Fabian socialists, and others was trying to destroy individual freedom and dominate the world. Douglas rounded out his philosophy with an anti-Semitic slur—at the centre of the world cabal, he asserted, were Jews.[10]

Aberhart was convinced that Douglas's monetary theories were sound and that international finance was planning to destroy individual freedom, but he did not share Douglas's anti-Semitism. In very short order Manning adopted his teacher's version of Social Credit and joined the movement.

Social Credit Comes to Power in Alberta

The 1935 election campaign that brought Social Credit to power was orchestrated by William Aberhart. Manning worked tirelessly for the cause, appearing at the podium with the leader and putting his own name up for election, but there was no question as to who was in charge. It was Aberhart who defined the party's ideology in his stirring radio addresses, who wrote the widely circulated pamphlets on Social Credit, and who organized the Social Credit study groups. Manning was his acolyte and chauffeur. And unlike others both within and outside the movement, Manning was not known to challenge the leader in political matters, preferring to listen to him and absorb his ideas.

In retrospect, the years leading up to the 1935 election formed a crucial stage in Manning's political development. His immersion in Social Credit ideas caused him to think seriously about political matters for the first time in his life, and he got a crash course in how to run an election campaign. His close political association with Aberhart was put into public view, which had an important impact on his future. Although there were many people in the movement who distinguished themselves by labouring mightily for Social Credit, no one became as closely linked with the leader himself as Ernest Manning, both in reality and in the public mind. Manning became, in effect, Aberhart's political understudy, with the rehearsals as part of the show.

As mentioned, the two Alberta men accepted Social Credit monetary theories, but did not incorporate Douglas's anti-Semitism into their beliefs or political platform. The bankers were evil and all-powerful, but they were not identified as Jewish. Also, the main focus of the 1935 campaign was on reforming the financial system, in particular on Aberhart's famous pledge to provide each adult in the province with $25 a month, a substantial sum during the Depression. The world plot idea was all but ignored until it surfaced in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The Alberta Social Crediters included some things in their philosophy that were not part of the Douglas doctrine. For example, they wanted to eliminate excessive profit-taking in the economy by converting unreasonably high profits into Social Credit. As Manning explained the matter in 1936, "no group of consumers should be exploited by anyone having possession of goods … [charging] prices that are unfair and excessive."[11] The early movement also advocated a comprehensive government-run medical plan that would cover every Albertan.[12] Manning was confident that such measures would belie "the common hearsay abroad today that Social Credit simply means the socialization of financial credit advocated by various progressive reformers of our day."[13]

In 1935 Manning ran successfully as one of six MLAs elected in the constituency of Calgary, getting the most votes of the 20 candidates in the city. Aberhart appointed him Provincial Secretary and, with some foreshadowing, Acting Premier. He was 26 years old. In an interview with the press, Manning claimed that he had had no interest in becoming a Cabinet minister "from the point of view of a job, although probably no one would believe it. I'd just as soon be busy with my Bible work."[14] Apparently Manning's detached attitude toward his role as a member of the government remained constant throughout his career. Years later, after he had retired from provincial politics, he said that he had not been "dying to be Premier" or been "married" to the job.[15] He probably saw religion as a higher calling than politics, although in his mind the former by no means precluded the latter. One should take on the world, he maintained, with "the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other."[16] In fact it was a Christian motivation that brought Manning to politics. As he explained many years later:

> I had no desire to go into politics… . And all the years I stayed in it, I never got to like politics in the political sense. I liked having the opportunity to do something, and the power to do something that needed to

> be done and could be done, and trying to solve people's problems… . [M]y greatest satisfaction came from things that affected people. It was a concern for people, and a desire to help solve their problems.[17]

He once explained that the two shafts of the Christian cross symbolized his philosophy of life. "Your vertical shaft—man's relationship with his God—the up and down relationship [is one aspect]… . The horizontal one reaches out to the neighbour on either side. You're to love your neighbour as yourself." Unless both aspects were present in a person's life, he claimed, one's life was not complete.[18]

Since a life in politics was not what he cherished most, Manning felt a sort of latitude or freedom to do things that others might not like. In the 1944 election, his first as Premier, he would tell his more vocal opponents, "Look, if there's somebody else you'd rather have to do this job, get him… . As long as I'm here, I'll do the best I can, and in this case to do the best I can requires doing this. If you don't like it and you think somebody else would serve you better, go and get him." "It's awfully hard to throw somebody out," he reflected years later, "if they say, 'I don't care if you throw me out or not, but as long as I'm here I will do what I think is best for the province and country.'"[19] Ironically, although he did not shudder at the thought of being out of office, Manning never lost an election in his 33 years in Alberta politics. He also came to see his well-known religious identification as a political asset. "People would say," he once remarked, "I have no use for Manning's religion, but I'm glad he's at the head of our government because he'll be honest."[20]

Social Credit in Office

In 1935 the task of implementing a Social Credit system fell to Aberhart, who also had to contend with the huge government debt and a provincial bond issue coming due. As a Cabinet minister in the first Social Credit administration, Manning was at the epicentre of those controversies, and in time he would assist with the plans for a Social Credit scheme. He had no political or philosophical misgivings about the introduction of a Social Credit system and would defend Social Credit monetary theories for the rest of his life.

While the plans were being laid for Social Credit, Manning attended to his more mundane duties as minister of Trade and Industry. In this position he created a series of new provincial regulations that modernized Alberta's labour practices. He produced a prodigious amount of legislation in Social Credit's first session, more than any other minister except Aberhart and the Provincial Treasurer.[21] Minimum wages for all but farm and domestic workers were created; the length of the working day was regulated; one day of rest per week was guaranteed; the qualifications for skilled tradesmen were formalized; collective bargaining was institutionalized; and the payment of wages to coal miners was protected.[22] Manning also created "codes," which were minimum and maximum prices that could be charged for certain goods and services. The minimum prices were designed to keep business operators afloat, the maximum to protect consumers. The codes lasted only about six months because both consumers and producers complained that they were unworkable.

In producing this legislation, Manning had to meet with a wide variety of business and labour leaders and was called upon to resolve a number of disputes and tensions between them. Though stressful, these negotiations provided Manning with his first experience with practical economic issues and conflict resolution. It also gave him his first taste of public criticism as an elected official: his legislation was harshly condemned by the Alberta Manufacturers' Association.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (ND-3-7109(B))

Ernest C. Manning as a young man, Edmonton, 1933.

Manning's post as minister of Trade and Industry made him responsible for developing Alberta's nascent industrial base, a project that would form the centrepiece of his years as Premier. At this time he felt that the best approach would be to try to attract small manufacturers from central Canada, who in Alberta would have the advantage of doing business without the competition that existed in Ontario and Quebec. The attempts to lure out-of-province investors to Alberta meant building bridges to the business community, an endeavour that would take on increasing importance as the attempts to implement Social Credit foundered.

Government ownership of industry was rejected by Manning, a stance he would maintain throughout his career. The Douglas Social Credit ideology held that prices could be regulated and businesses controlled in the public interest, but the formal ownership of the economy, even the banks, was to remain in private hands. Socialism was spurned because it stifled individualism and created the all-powerful state, and in any case could not solve the real problems of the economy. That a Social Credit system with its price controls and close control of industry and finance might also produce an overweening state did not enter Manning's mind, probably because neither Douglas nor Aberhart could see the monster staring them in the face either.

Other policies that the first Social Credit administration adopted as stopgap measures while the fight for Social Credit was waged also prefigured those that Manning would retain as Premier. For example, the new administration was against borrowing money. This practice was followed partly because after defaulting on the provincial debt the government could not get conventional credit. A second reason for not borrowing was ideological—it would prevent the province from being controlled by the money barons.

As the months went by, the first Social Credit government introduced some radical measures to deal with its bond issues and with the private debt that Albertans faced, but there was no sign of the promised Social Credit dividends or any other Social Credit initiative. A revolt was brewing not only among the general public but also among the Social Credit caucus in reaction to the government's inability to follow through on its promises. But before the revolt could take shape, Manning was diagnosed with tuberculosis and ordered by his doctor to take prolonged bed rest. He convalesced for about seven months, during which time a bitter caucus rebellion split the party and challenged Aberhart's leadership of the movement. The upheaval was just reaching its dénouement when Manning returned to health and his government responsibilities. He thus missed the recriminations and acrimony of the most divisive dispute ever to occur in the history of the Alberta Social Credit Party. He escaped the ordeal without making any enemies, which was a rather fortuitous state of affairs for a potential party leader. Not that alienating people was in his nature. Unlike Aberhart, whom one either loved or hated, Manning was conciliatory and tactful. " I always saw the truth of the old philosophy that the greatest victory you can have over an enemy is to make him your friend," he told an interviewer.[23]

The resolution of the backbenchers' revolt led to the creation of the Social Credit Board, which was to be composed of five private members of the Legislature. The Board had the responsibility of appointing a small commission of experts to implement Social Credit and oversee the introduction of Social Credit legislation. The chairman of the Board was soon in England trying to convince Douglas to come to Alberta to help the government bring its Social Credit scheme to fruition. Relations between Douglas and Aberhart had been strained for some time, and the founder was reluctant to accept the invitation. In his place he sent two emissaries, G.F. Powell and L.D. Byrne, who had close ties to Douglas and were prominent members of the British Social Credit movement. Thus began a period of about 10 years, four of which were to fall under Manning's watch as Premier, in which Douglas and his conspiratorial ideas were to have a considerable influence over the Alberta government.[24]

The major Social Credit legislation that followed the Social Credit Board's creation was either disallowed by the federal government or reserved by Alberta's Lieutenant-Governor, and was ultimately declared *ultra vires* by the Supreme Court of Canada. This at least made for some face-saving on the part of the Alberta government, since it could claim that it had tried to deliver on its promises but had been thwarted in its efforts by federal institutions.

In response to these setbacks, the government launched its optimistically named "Interim Program," which involved the establishment of Treasury Branches that were to allow for the imposition of a system of Social Credit without violating the federal government's jurisdiction over banking and currency. The scheme failed because Albertans were reluctant to accept Treasury Branch vouchers in lieu of Canadian currency, and because the system had no way of covering payments made to firms and individuals outside the province.

The outbreak of war in 1939 diverted people's attention from Social Credit issues and encouraged a spirit of cooperation with the federal government. Manning tried to enlist at the outset of the war, but was turned down because of his bout with tuberculosis. He became active in the local militia instead, eventually achieving the rank of captain.[25]

An election was held in 1940, which Social Credit won with a reduced majority of seats. The popular vote was extremely close, 43% for Social Credit and 42% for the Independents, who were a coalition of Liberals, Conservatives, and UFA supporters. The 43% figure represented the lowest level of popular support Social Credit would receive in a general election until its defeat in 1971.

Although it had won the election, the party felt stymied in its attempts to bring in a Social Credit system. The conventional recovery measures it had enacted had, at best, contributed to a modest improvement in economic conditions. But through it all the party did not abandon its faith in the soundness of Social Credit ideas. In the years after the 1940 election, it looked for new ways to get around the firewall built by the federal government and courts, but again it ultimately failed. This created smouldering resentment against international finance, which, Aberhart and Manning believed, had duped Mackenzie King and the Supreme Court into doing their bidding and had even bigger, more sinister plans for the postwar world at large.

Following Douglas, Aberhart was deeply suspicious of the Beveridge Plan for postwar reconstruction in the UK and was equally suspicious of the Marsh Report, which provided comparable planning for Canada. It was obvious, Aberhart thought, that these proposals were the work of socialists who were colluding with finance to sabotage the coming Allied victory; anyone could read between the lines and see the blueprint to smash Christianity and create a world slave state. Aberhart was particularly concerned with the plan to set up contributory social insurance schemes such as unemployment insurance, health plans, and old age pensions, which in his mind would bring Canadians closer to National Socialism. Because no government could afford to pay for these programs, funds would have to be borrowed from the banks, which of course would mean kowtowing to the money power. Another problem was that the contributions to these plans were to be compulsory, which for Aberhart constituted a violation of individual rights and contributed to the ever-increasing power of the state. The premiums would also reduce people's purchasing power, a highly undesirable outcome according to Social Credit theory. Above all, none of these programs would be necessary under a Social Credit system, which could bring prosperity and comfort to all.[26] Aberhart was also deeply suspicious of other aspects of Allied plans for the postwar world, such as the setting up of international bodies like the International Monetary Fund.

As he had done all his life, Manning accepted, holus-bolus, his teacher's views. In 1943, shortly after assuming the premiership, Manning stated that

> Ever since the first gun was fired in the war, a carefully laid conspiracy has been at work using the conditions created by the war in an effort to rob nations of their national sovereignty, to eliminate true democracy, to undermine the British Empire … and to set up a world dictatorship under a supreme international authority which would be able to dominate the economic life of every nation by controlling its money system and its armed forces.[27]

Manning also followed Aberhart's lead in opposing compulsory, contributory social insurance programs, a position he would retain for his entire political career.

Nearly 40 years after his party had voiced its opposition to the postwar reconstruction programs, Manning explained his position as follows:

> The Beveridge Plan … was a universal plan. Whether people needed the assistance, whether they were able to care for themselves, was not the point. The state did it. The people paid the taxes, and the state provided the services, across the board. The universality concept. We opposed that concept, on the Canadian Health Insurance Plan, and things of that kind. Our approach was that the state was responsible to see that those who were unable to provide for themselves were cared for. But that if the individual was capable [of] caring for himself, that was his responsibility. This again is a fundamental difference between the socialist philosophy and the philosophy that we pursued.[illegible]

The bellowing about the world conspiracy that came with Social Credit's opposition to the reconstruction proposals may have been amusing to some people, but it carried the potential for tragedy. Just when the horrors of the holocaust were being perpetrated by the Nazis, Douglas was fulminating about evil, scheming Jews bent on world domination. Jews in Alberta and across Canada had good reason to be concerned about the propagation of the Douglas doctrine, which some members of the Alberta Social Credit movement and its Quebec counterpart accepted in its entirety. *Today and Tomorrow*, which after the 1935 election had taken over from the *Social Credit Chronicle* as the Alberta party's quasi-official organ, gave the world plot idea a lot of coverage and named several prominent Jews as conspirators. Worse yet, a Social Credit member of Parliament was in the habit of reading excerpts from *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* into *Hansard* in the House of Commons in Ottawa. *The Protocols*, a forgery published in Russia in 1905 to excuse the Czar's pogrom against Jews, purported to describe the plans of Zionist leaders to destroy Christianity and take over the world. The document had a powerful influence on many anti-Semites in North America and Europe, including Douglas.

In 1942 Rabbi Solomon Frank confronted Aberhart about the anti-Semitism in the Social Credit movement and found him to be "most cordial, convincing, and sincere in his reactions." Aberhart assured him that he found anti-Semitism to be repugnant and that he would do all he could to eliminate any anti-Semitic tendency in his party.[illegible] Unfortunately, the problem did not disappear.

Aberhart died in May 1943. Manning was chosen as his successor at a meeting of caucus, where the nomination votes were overwhelmingly in his favour. No other person even got the minimum three votes needed to be nominated, and the confirmation vote was unanimous. On assuming the premiership he was only 34 years of age. He felt a sense of destiny: "I felt this was not by chance; that this was perhaps what I was here for."[illegible]

In addition to taking over the premiership from Aberhart, Manning stepped into his shoes on *Canada's National Back to the Bible Hour* (later renamed *Canada's National Bible Hour*), the radio program that Aberhart had broadcast since 1925. Manning had been a part of the program since 1930, and after the senior man's death he was its driving force, preaching and offering religious interpretations of current events for the next 46 years. His wife Muriel was responsible for the musical side of the show and for a time had him singing in a quartet that performed on the program.[11]

After Aberhart died the Manning family church was Fundamental Baptist in Edmonton, which had evolved from a Bible study group that met in the local Masonic hall.[12] Thus in religion as in politics, Manning preferred to be part of an independent, self-organizing unit rather than an established organization with a long history of fixed rules and rituals.

The New Premier

Alberta had a new Premier whose style of governing was rather different from that of his predecessor. Part of this can be traced to personality differences. Aberhart was loud and bombastic, whereas Manning was cool and logical. The older man was flamboyant, the younger reserved and dignified. Aberhart could be confrontational, whereas Manning was conciliatory. Aberhart did not like to delegate authority; Manning had no problem giving other members of the party and movement significant responsibilities. Aberhart was a "talker" who was not renowned for his listening skills. Manning spoke in a calm, lucid way, and unlike many politicians he was a very patient listener. "You can't learn anything when you're talking," he would tell his sons.[13] Manning even kept his name and home telephone number listed in the local directory for his entire career as Premier, and would receive calls at home from disgruntled citizens. Despite their personality differences, on matters of policy and political philosophy the two men were very similar. Both fully believed in the soundness of a Social Credit economic system and were willing to keep their Social Credit initiatives within constitutional bounds.

Like his predecessor, Manning renounced anti-Semitism. In March 1944 he spoke out in favour of "tolerance and co-operation," stating that "in a properly functioning democracy we have to overcome the divisions of party politics, religion, and racial origin which have been deliberately fostered by those who seek to enslave the people. In this crusade for human liberation there is no place for anti-Christianity, anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, or anti-anything else."[14] Although sincere, like Aberhart's pronouncements on the matter Manning's were apparently not accompanied with any immediate, concrete actions to deal with the problem. Some indication of Manning's view of the situation is provided in a private letter he wrote in 1947 concerning the *Canadian Social Crediter*, which had replaced *Today and Tomorrow* and like the earlier publication contained anti-Semitic materials:

> I think I have advised pretty nearly every member of the national executive that the *Canadian Social Crediter* for some considerable time has been a definite detriment to the Social Credit movement and to our work as a government in this province. In spite of this fact the national executive thus far has not taken any effective action to correct the situation… . [I]f the organ had remained under the provincial organization in this province … its policy would be very different from what it is today, but I have refrained from interfering with a matter which is now under the jurisdiction of the national executive.[15]

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Ernest Manning as Premier, 1943

Although he was not anti-Semitic, Manning seemed to be oblivious to the seriousness of the issue when he became Premier, and he may have had a permanent blind spot regarding how Canadian Jews felt about the issue of anti-Semitism in the Social Credit movement. To be sure, in his second term as Premier he would expel the anti-Semites from the movement and government. Yet in 1980, 12 years after he had retired from provincial politics, in response to an interviewer's query about allegations of anti-Semitism in the party in the 1960s, he said: "[I]n my years in political life, I don't think I had any stronger group of supporters than the Jewish community in Alberta. I have many good friends among the Jewish community. And of course they would just laugh at this stuff. They knew it was propaganda in the press."

In Manning's first term as Premier, his energies were focussed on trying to develop a general strategy for governing the province and winning the next election, which was held in 1944. The strategy taken by Manning would form the prototype for the rest of his tenure as Premier: prudent (albeit high by the standards of the day) levels of spending on social services and infrastructure; entente with the business community; and alarmist anti-socialism.

The working relationship with business was several years in the making. In the period leading up to the 1935 election, business had been hysterically anti-Social Credit. Manning had ameliorated the situation somewhat in the party's first term of office in his role as minister of Trade and Industry, although in the 1940 election business still had Social Credit in its crosshairs. The relationship warmed a bit after the late 1930s mainly because, thanks to the courts, no unorthodox economic policies had been implemented and no damage had been done. The party was seen as impotent as far as the implementation of Social Credit was concerned and thus at worst innocuous. That the economy returned to and eventually surpassed pre-Depression levels in the war years helped matters as well.

The party's strident anti-socialism was another factor that allowed it to gain favour with business interests, in particular the larger enterprises. Douglas had long opposed socialism on the grounds that it leads to regimentation and the all-powerful state, although his views on the matter were usually buried in a long exposition on the evils of finance. The situation changed near the end of the war when it became clear that the Allies would win and that a consensus was emerging about postwar reconstruction and the place that the welfare state would have in it. Douglas recognized that the British Social Credit movement was going nowhere and became more explicitly anti-socialist. His message reached Alberta via the Social Credit Board, which began to steer its invective away from finance and toward the evils of socialism.

Although the early Alberta Social Credit movement had opposed socialism in principle, it had not devoted much attention to the issue, seeing it largely as an insignificant matter in Canada compared to the threat posed by finance. It had occasionally collaborated with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and even communists in various ridings during election campaigns, and with the surge in support for the CCF in the later war years many rank-and-file members pressed for further Social Credit/CCF cooperation. The party had passed some quasi-socialist legislation, such as the Alberta Marketing Act of 1939, which gave the province the right to buy, sell, or manufacture any product. It had acquired the rights to manufacture parts for farm machinery and had set up distribution centres for parts that were manufactured elsewhere. It had also opened the Alberta Government Insurance Office, which sold fire and life insurance. And as noted, Manning himself had expressed no qualms about distributing excessive profits to the public.

The party had also supported a number of left-leaning social programs. School grants had increased markedly under Social Credit rule; medical care for tuberculosis, cancer, and polio had been subsidized for people unable to pay; and by 1944 such treatment was free for all. Alberta (along with British Columbia) provided the second highest federal pension supplements for the needy elderly. All of these policies bore a strong resemblance to the reconstruction plans being made in Ottawa and London that the party vehemently opposed, and made the root-and-branch anti-socialism they were to adopt rather surprising. (To be fair, the party had never claimed that public ownership in and of itself could rectify the fundamental flaws of the economy.)

The Alberta Social Credit Party's sudden desire to alert the province to the dangers of socialism, although genuine, appears to have been caused primarily by the groundswell of support for the CCF in the late war years and the threat to Social Credit rule that this presented. To this point there had never been a socialist party in Alberta with a realistic chance of gaining power, so taking a stand against socialism had not been necessary. But now things were different: Joseph Stalin, an ally, was affectionately known as "Uncle Joe"; Labour was inching toward victory in Britain; and a 1943 Gallup poll indicated that the federal CCF was supported by 29% of Canadian voters, compared to 28% each for the Liberals and Conservatives.

Manning began to see all forms of socialism as equivalent and equally evil. The CCF variant, which in Alberta favoured the development of the province's natural resources through public ownership and, where possible, the development of other areas of the economy in the same way, was described by him as Nazism in the making. The fight against socialism gave the movement a new raison d'être, which became increasingly important as the fight against finance grew more hopeless.

Manning's three-pronged strategy for the 1944 election worked rather well. The entente with the Alberta establishment was taken a step closer; in fact the party was now seen as the second-best option by many supporters of the Independents. Most dailies in the province had had nothing but scorn for Social Credit since its emergence on the scene in 1932, but now the *Edmonton Journal* and the *Calgary Herald* recommended that their readers use the transferable ballot system to select the party as their second choice. Although this was a rather mild endorsement, the message was clear: these people are not as dangerous as we thought and are certainly preferable to the CCF.

The party won the election with 52% of the vote, taking a large majority of seats. The groundswell of support for the CCF was no mirage—it received 25% of the popular vote, compared to 11% in 1940. Manning may have been overzealous in his condemnation of the CCF, but there was no arguing with the result. In fact he had beaten back the threat from the left so well that many people came to view the traditional parties in Alberta, the Liberals and Conservatives, as redundant.

Social Credit was at a point of transition. It was becoming more of a "party" than a "movement." Its Social Credit ideology was receding into the background, and what it delivered as a government was not substantially different from that of a mainstream party. Its newfound acceptance with the powers that be was evident in the difficulties that opposition parties encountered in raising money after 1944. When Liberal leader J. Harper Prowse approached formerly friendly donors for funds in the late 1940s, he was told, "We've got a business government now. Why rock the boat and let in the CCF?"

The End of the Beginning

Major changes took place during Social Credit's next term of office. On the international scene, the war between the Allies and the Axis powers ended with unconditional Allied victory. In Alberta, the internal party war between those who supported Aberhart's and Manning's version of Social Credit versus that of Douglas concluded with a rout of the Douglasites. By the end of the term, even the Aberhart/Manning variant would be laid to rest, although some in the movement would always believe that a rebirth was possible.

Manning took over as Provincial Treasurer, spending a good deal of his time negotiating the re-funding of the provincial debt. The province was in default from 1935 to 1945 for amounts totalling $160 million. The deal he worked out had the province pay no more than 3.5% interest on the funds owing, which proved to be a rather adroit bit of negotiating, since interest rates went up steadily in the years after the deal was signed. His governments ran a series of postwar budgetary surpluses, which were used to pay off the debt.

The Alberta Bill of Rights Act of 1946, the last attempt to introduce a Social Credit system in Alberta, reproduced in miniature what the movement had stood for since 1932. It was divided into two parts. The first part contained a list of basic human rights, along with what appeared to be the sort of conventional reform or social democratic measures that had gained popularity in North America and Western Europe since the Depression: a guaranteed annual income of $600; entitlements to educational, medical, and pension benefits, and so on. The second part—the novel feature—was that these programs were to be financed through the implementation of a Social Credit system. A Board of Credit Commissioners was to be set up to coordinate the issuing of "credit deposits" (Social Credit) through existing financial institutions. "For every dollar's worth of goods produced," Manning explained, "there must be made available to the consuming public a corresponding amount of purchasing power,"[illegible] a proposition that followed directly from Douglas's monetary theories.

At Manning's insistence, the act was only to come into effect upon a declaration by the Supreme Court of Alberta that it was constitutional, which was consistent with Aberhart's and Manning's long-standing policy that their initiatives must not violate the laws of the land. The court ruled that the first part of the act, which described the human rights and social welfare measures, was constitutional. The second part, which outlined the Social Credit system that would pay for the social programs, was declared unconstitutional. The courts had, once and for all, sunk the Social Credit ship that Manning imagined would take Alberta to the land of plenty. He would soon learn that the province would reach its destination anyway, although the voyage would be taken on a sea of oil rather than an ocean of Social Credit dividends.

In February 1947 oil was discovered near Leduc, just south of Edmonton. It was not the first oil discovery in Alberta; oil had been produced commercially in modest quantities in Turner Valley, south of Calgary, since 1914. The Turner Valley wells were in naphtha fields, which yielded huge quantities of gas, but relatively little oil. Crude oil was discovered in the area in the late 1930s, but in small quantities. The Leduc find was crude oil and lots of it, producing ten times the amount of oil being pumped out of Turner Valley. A string of similar and ever-larger finds soon followed, which, in conjunction with a raging post-war economy, transformed Alberta from a humble "have not" province into a forceful, affluent one.

Another event that cleared the way for the modernization of Alberta, and Manning's stewardship of the transformation, was the expulsion of the Douglasites from the provincial Social Credit movement. Those loyal to Douglas and his extremist views had been part of the public persona of Social Credit in Alberta since the backbenchers' revolt of 1937, and had exercised considerable influence on public policy. Within weeks of the Leduc discovery, a showdown emerged between the Douglasites, who had always been a minority in the Social Credit League, and those who adhered to the Aberhart/Manning version of Social Credit. A report of the Social Credit Board was tabled in the Legislature that contained the latest pronouncements of Douglas, including the idea that the secret ballot should be abolished in favour of a recorded vote. Under this plan people would sign on to the programs they favoured and would be taxed for them, but would not have to pay for any government project they did not endorse. The conventional voting system gave governments a mandate to take from one person to give to another, which in Douglas's estimation was the modern equivalent of the divine right of kings.[illegible] Another Douglasite innovation presented in the report was the idea that majority rule "is definitely not a democratic concept."[illegible] The report also named several prominent British and American Jews as ringleaders in the socialist/international finance world plot nexus.[illegible]

The report was roundly castigated by the Alberta press, Jewish organizations, and CCF leader Elmer Roper. In response, Manning claimed in the Legislature that there was a "vicious campaign of deliberate misrepresentation" against his government, and that "a deliberate attempt is being made to associate the government and the Social Credit movement with various viewpoints and individual opinions which we, as a government and a movement, do not endorse and to which we do not subscribe." He then presented three resolutions, including the following:

> 2) We condemn, repudiate, and completely disassociate ourselves and the Social Credit movement in Alberta from any statements or publications which are incompatible with the established British ideals of democratic freedom or which endorse, excuse, or incite anti-Semitism or racial or religious intolerance in any form.
>
> 3) We reiterate our intention to do everything in our power to unite the people of this province and country irrespective of colour, race, or creed in an all-out effort to end the present vicious financial monopoly and restore the effective control over money and credit to the people themselves."

This time Manning's words were matched with decisive action. He abolished the Social Credit Board, officially disassociating the party from what he described as the "little faction of 'Douglasites' who think they have some special monopoly on the basic principles of Social Credit." He also dismissed key personnel who had been loyal to Douglas. J.P. Gillese, the editor of the *Canadian Social Crediter*, was asked to resign. Denis Byrne, an emissary of Douglas who had been deputy minister, Department of Economic Affairs, and was very influential with the Social Credit Board, was discharged as well. R.E. Ansley was fired from Cabinet, and A.V. Bourcier was expelled from the Social Credit League.

Manning's later actions confirmed the depth of his convictions. He supported the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, and for years thereafter interpreted the creation of the modern Israel as a sign that Christ was coming again. Years later he would see the establishment of Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank as a fulfilment of prophecy, and in 1982 he received the National Humanitarian Award from B'nai Brith Canada.

With the party purged of Douglasites, oil gushing at Leduc, and a modicum of prosperity that allowed for modest increases in spending on social services, Manning's party was returned to power with 56% of the popular vote in the election of 1948, up four percentage points from 1944. A plebiscite was held in conjunction with the election on the issue of turning privately owned Calgary Power, which supplied electricity to most of the province, into a provincially owned utility. Manning campaigned against nationalization and managed to convince a slim majority of his fellow Albertans to keep the utility under private ownership.

Manning considered the years before this election to be years of achievement for Social Credit that were later overshadowed by the glamourous oil years:

> I've read and heard so many recitations of how it was oil that made Alberta, and everything that the Social Credit government did they owed to oil. We had been in office 12 years before Leduc came in, and we'd started in the depths of the Depression with the province in bankruptcy for all practical purposes. We had gone through those 12 years

> without borrowing a dollar of money to run the province, except a little bit in the first few months we were in office.... We'd put the province on a pay-as-you-go basis; we had built a lot of roads; we'd hardsurfaced some roads; we'd started a construction program at the University; we'd built a lot of hospitals. And all of this had been done before oil was a factor at all.

Social Credit Philosophy Revised

With the stark realization that Social Credit would never be implemented weighing heavily on his mind, Manning had to chart a new course for himself and the party. The route he chose appears to have been reached in part by a process of elimination. Gone, due to the actions of the courts and practical experience, were the ideas of distributing Social Credit and setting minimum and maximum prices for goods and services. What remained of the Social Credit ideology included the belief that the individual was the most important entity in society, and the notion that the ownership of productive enterprises should remain in private hands.

Manning and the party he led became, more or less by default, economic neo-liberals in the classic sense of the term. Government involvement in the economy was to be kept to a minimum; to do otherwise would interfere with wealth creation and thus make both individuals and society as a whole poorer. An activist state, Manning believed, would create an unhealthy dependency on government, which would prevent individuals from becoming self-reliant and thus preclude them from reaching their true potential as human beings. He retained the belief that if the state were to play a leading role in the economy, socialism and all its attendant problems would be created. The main role of the state, according to his revised doctrine, was to ensure equality of opportunity and foster an economic environment in which individuals could create wealth for themselves. The words "Social Credit" were used less and less often. Now the party stood for the "free enterprise way of life." Looking back at the more interventionist policies and legislation of the early movement, Manning told an interviewer:

> I've certainly come to appreciate, more and more as the years go by, the disadvantages of government's becoming involved in areas that the private sector can handle, unless there's some overwhelming, compelling reason for doing it.

The new goal of creating an economic climate favourable to private sector development was not a complete abandonment of Social Credit principles. The devils of the piece for Social Crediters were always the banks and other financial institutions; non-financial businesses were portrayed as victims of the money power who would be able to offer employment and produce wealth for the society if only they could break free from the clutches of finance. "It was a very fundamental distinction," Manning explained in looking back on the early Social Credit movement, "between the financial segment of the business world, which we held responsible for the plight of the industrial world as well as the consuming public. And therefore in our criticism of the financial institutions it was almost in a sense criticism on behalf of the private sector of the industrial world."[54]

Manning's new political orientation still featured his conspiratorial outlooks on socialism and communism, attitudes that became more mainstream with the onset of the Cold War. Socialists and communists, he believed, had infiltrated Canadian society and were out to destroy capitalism and democracy. Shortly after his retirement in 1968, he stated that this threat

> is operative in every democratic country left in the world and I think most of it is … probably directed by some pretty skilled fellows who have probably pretty close ties with the Soviet Union itself… . This same effort, along different lines, is evident, in my view, in news media, which are very heavily slanted to socialistic philosophy. This isn't by chance, it's because communism has been smart enough to see … that there are always a goodly number of men in that field who are sympathetic to the socialistic and even communistic philosophy. You even have the same thing, to varying degrees, in the field of education. It isn't by chance that you find [this] agitation of Marxism and so forth in many of our universities.[55]

In salvaging what he could of the of the original Social Credit doctrine, Manning chose a set of principles that were consistent with his personal religious beliefs. Of particular importance were his views on the supremacy of the individual. As an evangelical Protestant, he believed that it was ultimately up to the individual to achieve salvation and that personal striving was at the heart of the religious quest; no priest or institutional body could bestow salvation on an individual. Although he never said so explicitly, he probably viewed a liberal capitalist economy conjoined with liberal democracy as the best possible setting for the personal struggle for grace and salvation,[56] since this arrangement provided the most freedom and potential for personal growth for the individual, and the greatest opportunity for material well being. His mentor Aberhart had made the point that "the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be heard much better by men and women and children who are not starving. Remember that Christ fed the five thousand."[57]

Manning's battles with what he saw as the forces of socialism and communism definitely had religious implications. He viewed the USSR as the epitome of the atheism, class struggle, and state control that threatened to destroy Christianity and democracy, and he believed that the Soviet Union was the great king of the north described in the book of Daniel.[58] Manning felt that victory against the anti-democratic, secularist, socialist forces was very much in doubt and that Canadian society had already degenerated significantly. A typical theme in his radio sermons was that "in any unregenerate society, the will of the people is bound to come into conflict with the will of God."[59]

Believing that he was part of a cosmic struggle against evil forces, Manning pursued his neo-liberal policies with an uncommon passion. At stake was not only the economic and spiritual well-being of Albertans. His larger aim was to show the world how an economy and society could be created that was demonstrably superior to anything that socialism in its various guises could produce. Manning seems not to have been motivated by personal financial gain; the most he ever earned as Premier was $18,000 per year, plus the sessional indemnity of $7,000 per year received by each member of the Legislature.[60] And he had heavy demands on his modest salary. He tithed, calculating his offering based on his earnings before deductions,[61] and he faced steep medical expenses for his disabled son Keith. He also covered some of the expenses of his radio program when it went into deficit.[62] It was only after he retired from the premiership that he had a chance to earn a substantial income.

Manning's approach to the development of the province's oil and gas sector illustrates how he implemented his neo-liberal economic principles. As early as the late 1930s, following the disallowance of Social Credit legislation, the government was searching for another way to solve the economic crisis in the province. Development of the province's petroleum industry was seen as a logical alternative. The government first tried to attract capital from Ontario and Quebec to develop the industry, but could find no takers. They then sent a delegation headed by Nathan Eldon Tanner to Britain to try to woo investors there. The British group expressed interest, but was concerned about the looming war in Europe and decided to stand pat until a more stable political climate prevailed. Finally, the government turned to American oil companies, which were not only willing to invest in Alberta but also promised to bring their expertise in the industry to the province, something the central Canadian and British investors could not do. Looking back on the situation, Manning remarked:

> It disturbs me a bit in our present day when I hear some of the negative nationalists that we have in this country—groups like the Committee for an Independent Canada and that type—railing against American involvement in the oil industry in Canada, because frankly had it not been for the positive response of the American oil companies in those late '30s, I hate to think where we might be in Canada today as far as our oil situation is concerned.

He added that

> it was a firm policy of the Social Credit government *never* to give up title of ownership to any of our mineral resources—land, oil, coal, no matter what it was. We were completely committed to the development of those resources by private enterprise, but only under lease agreements with the province under which the ownership, the title to the resources, always remained with the Crown in the right of Alberta.[63]

Manning's method of developing the petroleum industry was to have private firms spend their own money on exploration, extraction, and processing. The province's role would be limited to negotiating markets with other governments, facilitating the building of pipelines, and making and enforcing industry regulations. Provincial revenues were to come mainly from production royalties and bids to drill on Crown reservations.[64] In 1967 Manning announced that in the previous 20 years $2.25 billion had accrued to the provincial treasury through oil and gas revenues.[65]

Manning's approach to the oil and gas industry was not entirely driven by ideology. His choices were limited. Searching for petroleum, he quickly learned, was risky and expensive. The Leduc discovery made by Imperial Oil came after it had drilled 133 consecutive dry holes and spent $20 million. Before Leduc a different company had built $400,000 worth of rural roads to reach a potential well and had spent another $1,600,000 drilling it, only to have it come up dry. It would have been very difficult for a province still heavily in debt to finance this sort of venture by creating a provincially owned oil company. Even if that were feasible, in Manning's estimation it would have been wrong to risk public money on it. The province was also at a disadvantage in that it was a considerable distance from major markets and lacked the expertise and experience to undertake oil and gas production. Manning thought it was difficult enough to lure private capital into Alberta, let alone set up a provincially owned company or create an industry that was dominated by Canadian or Alberta firms. To be sure, Saskatchewan experimented with some of these alternatives, but as one Social Credit insider quipped, "Her major export was people."

Manning also felt a sense of affinity with the businesses that were set up in Alberta. He once told an interviewer, "business had always fascinated me. If I hadn't gone into government, I certainly would have been interested in getting involved in the business world to some degree at least." His own role in the development of the oil industry in Alberta was quite significant. He worked very closely with Nathan Eldon Tanner, who was the minister responsible for petroleum development at the time of the Leduc discovery, and he took over as minister of Mines and Minerals when Tanner retired a few years later.

Although Manning's new philosophy was decidedly neo-liberal, he was presiding over an industry that, by its very nature, invited government regulation. In the words of Richards and Pratt, "Oil and gas are resources whose peculiar physical properties virtually compel intervention by the state in order to prevent a pattern of chaotic competition." If left unregulated, individual oil and gas companies tend to extract the resources quicky, thereby maximizing short-term profits; but for technical, engineering reasons this approach leaves a substantial proportion of the oil in the ground. Regulation was also required to prevent overproduction once the industry had developed to the point where more oil and gas was being produced than the market could bear.

In Alberta and other regions, the wastage of natural gas that accompanied oil extraction was a major concern. In response to this problem, in 1938 the Aberhart government had set up the Oil and Gas Conservation Board (later renamed and expanded as the Energy Resources Conservation Board). As it evolved, the Board became responsible for regulating oil and gas exploration, production, and distribution. The Board was a quasi-judicial body that operated at arm's length from the government of the day. In Manning's time it reported its recommendations to the Premier, who, along with the Department of Mines and Minerals, would review its findings. The Premier would then discuss the Board's recommendations with the Cabinet and seek its approval. Although it typically asked for clarifications and information, the Cabinet rarely negated the recommendations of the Board. In looking back on his responsibilities in the post-Leduc era, Manning said that he could not "recall the government in all the years I was Premier ever refusing to approve a recommendation of the Conservation Board."

The 1950s saw the construction of a series of oil and gas pipelines, which were major projects in themselves. By this time the industry produced enough to meet the demands of the provincial market and needed pipelines to reach markets in other Canadian provinces and the United States. Alberta Gas Trunk Line (AGTL) was set up in 1954 by the Manning government as a joint public-private venture, in part to establish provincial control over gas transmissions.[73] Since the federal government has jurisdiction over interprovincial and international trade, if a pipeline crosses a provincial boundary it falls under federal control. AGTL was designed to transport Alberta gas to provincial boundaries and the US border, thus keeping gas shipment under provincial jurisdiction. "Theoretically … if we'd ever had a constitutional hassle over export of gas under that arrangement, you could just simply turn the tap off at the border," Manning explained.[74] Non-voting shares in AGTL were sold to the public, which soon resulted in handsome profits for the thousands of people who invested in them.

The control of AGTL was vested in participating gas producers, export companies, utility companies, and the provincial government. This set-up was used to keep costs to a minimum, since any increases would have to be borne by one of the three non-governmental sectors that controlled the company. "Our whole idea was to keep the cost of gas to the Alberta people down," Manning claimed.[75] AGTL was vintage Manning—it accomplished his government's goals without relying on government ownership, and did so with a minimum of government involvement. The company later expanded into petrochemicals and other industrial activities and was renamed Nova Corporation.

A further illustration of Manning's neo-liberalism can be found in his policy on health care. Manning opposed universal health-care schemes such as those brought in by the Saskatchewan government in the early 1960s. A superior alternative, he believed, was the Alberta system that was introduced in 1963. It involved subsidizing low-income people for the medical premiums they paid to private insurance companies or to Medical Services Incorporated, the plan run by the Alberta medical profession.[76] The Alberta scheme also involved a fixed per diem fee for hospital stays. The hospital fees, Manning explained, "leaves with the individual obtaining the service at least some measure of personal financial responsibility and, secondly, such a fee minimizes patients staying in a hospital longer than necessary."[77] He reasoned that his provincial medical plan was better than universal plans with no direct fees because the latter encouraged overuse of medical facilities and hid the real cost of health care from taxpayers. Manning opposed the national health care arrangements proposed by the federal government in the mid-1960s on the grounds that they would be too costly and would involve compulsion. It was, he said, "purely a welfare-state socialistic program."[78] He finally relented when he learned that Albertans would have to pay for federal health-care subsidies through their federal taxes regardless of whether Alberta participated in the program.

Manning's neo-liberalism was also evident in his opposition to federal regional development programs, even proposals to invest federal money in northern Alberta. Grants to private businesses, he argued, interfered with the workings of the market and ultimately created inefficiencies and waste.

Alberta Politics and Society in the Post-Leduc Era

The Leduc discovery was a watershed for the province, but the transition from a primarily agrarian-based economy to one based mainly on oil and gas did not occur overnight. In fact Alberta qualified as a "have not" province and received federal equalization payments until 1961. Still, by 1950 approximately one-third of the Alberta government's revenues accrued from natural resource development.[79] As the decade unfolded, funds from the sale of Crown leases (which companies purchased to get drilling rights on land where oil had been discovered) were plowed into the construction of bridges, hospitals, university facilities, schools, and other capital projects. Oil and gas royalties, on the other hand, went into general revenues and were spent to improve social services and sometimes to top up the lease money spent on capital projects.

This was a remarkable turnaround for a province that had recently weathered the Depression, especially since the price of oil in the pre-OPEC days was low compared to what it would be after 1973 when the organization succeeded in drastically increasing world oil prices. In Manning's time oil sold for as low as $2.40 a barrel, a far cry from the world price of $40, which appeared in the late 1970s.[80] Government revenues in his time, Manning later said, were "chicken feed" compared to what governments had in the post-Social Credit period.[81] Also, oil and gas production is not labour-intensive, so there was not a sudden change in the provincial class structure. More people came to be employed in the sectors that serviced the oil and gas industry than in the industry itself.

Manning and his party had to convince Albertans that their approach to the management of the province's affairs was superior to that proposed by the opposition parties. In the late 1940s and into the 1950s, the leading critic of Manning's political leadership and the main challenger for the Premier's office was Liberal leader J. Harper Prowse. When Prowse became Liberal leader in 1947, the prospects for the Liberals in Alberta were bleak. Party president Wes Stambaugh tried to develop some public enthusiasm for the party, but found there were few active Liberals in the province. In one instance Stambaugh arrived in a town with a list of six active Liberals whom he wanted to get involved in the local party organization, only to find that four of them were dead and a fifth worked in the constituency office of the local Social Credit member of the Legislature.[82]

The most contentious issue relating to natural resource development in post-Leduc Alberta was the government's proposal to allow the transmission of natural gas out of the province. Cheap gas for consumers had long been considered a natural right by Albertans, who as early as 1900 had used the resource to light city streets and to heat their homes and farms. (The ready access to gas in the city of Medicine Hat prompted Rudyard Kipling to say that the city had "all hell for a basement.") Many people in the province believed that the inexpensive gas could also be used as an incentive for local industrial development. It was believed that allowing the transmission of gas out of the province would drive local gas prices up, which would threaten both consumer and industrial access to the resource. Prowse vowed that he would go down in Alberta history as "the man who delayed gas exports."[83]

But there was pressure on Manning and his government to allow gas exports to other provinces and the United States. The federal government in the person of C.D. Howe insisted that gas be exported from Alberta to states in the American northwest for reasons of continental military defence. There was also heavy lobbying on the part of several business consortia to allow gas removals. An added pressure was Manning's fear that if he did not allow gas exports, federally incorporated companies would build pipelines in Alberta, eventually leading to the export of gas at low prices under federal jurisdiction, thereby reducing provincial revenues and control. Manning asked the government in Ottawa to pass legislation that would make it necessary to get provincial permission before gas could be transferred out of the province, but it refused. In response, in 1949 the Social Credit government passed the Gas Resources Preservation Act, which declared that gas transmissions had to be approved by the provincial Gas Conservation Board, thus bolstering provincial control.[54]

Manning argued that the industrialization of Alberta would be enhanced, not impeded, if the province allowed gas exports. He suggested that a thriving petrochemical industry could be created that would make use of the substances removed from gas before it was exported. The province's own gas requirements would be taken care of, his government maintained, if permission to export gas were contingent on having many years' worth of reserves available for consumption in Alberta. Eventually it was agreed that exports would be allowed if a 30-year supply of gas had accumulated.[55] Amounts surplus to that would be made available on the Canadian market, and if there were still gas remaining it could be exported to the United States.

Another prominent issue of the day was the question of provincial subsidies to municipalities. Prowse claimed that the government was "keeping their own balance sheet in order by throwing on the shoulders of your local government all of the major responsibilities."[56] The government denied that it was being unfair to the municipalities, citing low levels of combined provincial-municipal taxation and the availability of low-interest provincial loans to the cities.

The barbs thrown by the opposition did little to shake public confidence in the Manning regime. Social Credit won the 1952 election with 56% of the vote, winning all but seven of the province's 60 ridings. The next election, however, would be much more challenging.

Up to this time, Social Credit had a reputation for honesty and integrity that went virtually unchallenged. The party had been subject to searing criticism and ridicule from all sides for its policies and for the way it handled various public issues, but its public persona as a party of devoted Christians had insulated it from allegations of dishonesty and corruption. That all changed after the 1952 election.

It came to light that the government was renting an office in a building owned by two Social Credit members of the Legislature, a situation that was contrary to the Legislative Assembly Act. The two members were fined and had to resign their seats. Soon a flood of corruption allegations were made by opposition members, in particular the Liberals. The allegations included a claim that government members and party officials had received preferential treatment in getting loans from the provincially owned Treasury Branches, that the province's procurement and tendering practices were plagued with favouritism, that the government had engaged in a massive cover-up, and that Manning himself had

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-5660-7132(A))

Pioneers of the Social Credit movement in Alberta being honoured at a banquet. Left to right: Mrs. Manning, Premier E.C. Manning, Tom Glen, first president of the Calgary Social Credit group, Mrs. Louisa Lewis, convener of the dinner, Mrs. Temple and E.R.A. Temple, president of the Calgary Social Credit Constituency Association. (Photograph by Jack De Lorme, Calgary; published in the Albertan, *January 14, 1955.)*

profited from the corruption. The provincial press joined in the attack, writing blistering condemnations of the government. A front page editorial in the *Calgary Herald*, for example, stated that "Social Credit is thinly disguised fascism."

Manning proclaimed his innocence, insisted that the charges against his government were unfounded, and threatened to sue for libel. He promised a Royal Commission to investigate the allegations and promptly called an election for May 1955, only three years into the government's mandate. His party won the election, but saw its share of the popular vote dip to 46%, down 10 percentage points from 1952. The Liberals gained support, winning 15 seats and 31% of the popular vote.

The victory against the concerted attack of the opposition and the press allowed Manning to retain, in the words of Meir Serfaty, his "aura of invincibility." That aura would spook opposition politicians right up until his retirement in 1968. One commentator has remarked that for opposition politicians in the Manning era, "organizing against Social Credit was like chiselling through granite."

In 1956 a Royal Commission exonerated Manning and the other members of the government of any criminal action. To be sure that the public got the message, the

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-5600-6660-(H))

Fresh from his election victory, Manning (right) appears with Lieutenant-Governor J.J. Bowlen during the 1955 Calgary Stampede parade, which 90,000 people lined the streets to watch. (Photograph by Jack De Lorme, Calgary; published in the Albertan, *July 12, 1955.)*

government sent a summary of the Commission's findings to every home in Alberta.[89] Although no evidence of wrongdoing was found, the Commission recommended that more formal procedures for land procurement and other dealings with the government be established. Manning accepted the Commission's findings and introduced the recommended changes, which left the opposition without a pressing issue for the next election.

Manning's experiences with the press in the early years of the movement and in the mid-1950s left him with bitter feelings toward the media. He spoke of the

> so-called "investigative reporting," which is the in-house term for paid character assassins. This is the kind of thing they do. They hold their jobs and get their promotions because they assassinate characters. So anything that they can give a negative interpretation to, or a dishonest interpretation to, they do. I'm generalizing too much there; that's not true of all of them. But unfortunately it's true of far too many of the people in that field.[90]

Manning also believed that the media had a strong left-wing bias.

Livid at the accusations of corruption and feeling somewhat uneasy about the gains the Liberals had made in the 1955 election, the Social Credit Party decided to discontinue the preferential ballot system for electing members of the Legislature. The government believed that the opposition parties were sabotaging the voting system by encouraging their supporters to list the other opposition parties as their second and third preferences, thereby avoiding a split in the opposition vote. In the Legislature, Social Credit members claimed the preferential system was being abolished because it contributed to a large number of spoiled ballots.

The government also distributed "Citizen Participation Dividends," which were cash payments made directly to Albertans that would have a total value equal to one-third of all government oil revenues. It was not Social Credit, but Manning may have felt a sense of satisfaction at finally being able to provide direct payments to the public after so many years of trying. The payments took place over a period of two years. Ironically, the program was discontinued when a public opinion poll done by the party showed that a majority of Albertans believed that the money would be better spent on capital projects. The funds were then diverted to a project to create homes for senior citizens.

The homes for seniors were just a small part of the social spending by the Alberta government at this time. By 1957 the province led the country in per capita spending for public services such as education, roads, health care, pensions, and other social services. In the late 1950s the government also changed its financial arrangements with the municipalities, giving them one-third of the revenues it collected from the oil industry.

The Manning aura was back with a vengeance in the election of 1959. His party earned 56% of the popular vote and captured all but four of 65 seats. The election brought about the near-collapse of the Alberta CCF, which lost the only two seats it had and dropped to 5% in the popular vote. The hopelessness of the left in this era was illustrated by an experience an Alberta union leader had on election night. The unionist dropped into CCF headquarters in Edmonton as the dismal results became known, only to find the party's socialist leaders gaily playing bridge. "[T]he people of Alberta will vote for socialism when the time arrives," they told him. In later years, after the formation of the Alberta NDP in 1962, party organizers would travel the entire province in an effort to drum up support, sometimes speaking to an audience of one—a Social Crediter who was looking in on them.

In 1959 the Alberta government began a new five-year spending program to fight the recession that had developed in the late 1950s. By this time it had accumulated a $330 million reserve from oil and gas revenues, and Manning felt the time was right to spend some of it to stimulate the economy. He announced major spending initiatives for each of the next five years: in 1959 the main project was the building of the senior citizens' homes; 1960 saw major spending for local community improvements; in 1961 a hospital and diagnostic treatment centre came under construction in Calgary; in 1962 health facilities for children were expanded; and in 1963 plans were underway for a provincial archive and museum. There was also a host of smaller-scale projects undertaken in those years, including new university scholarship programs, technical and apprenticeship training programs, a new farm loan plan, and the establishment of a junior forest ranger organization. All of this spending was of the traditional Social Credit, pay-as-you-go variety—no debt was incurred.

Showering Alberta with all this new spending seemed to work well politically for Manning's government. It won the election of 1963 in decisive fashion, taking 55% of the vote and 60 of 63 seats. Manning's recollection was that "we didn't work unduly hard in that election."[98] During the campaign, the opposition parties found it difficult to find a critical issue that would resonate with the public. The charge that Albertans were not getting a fair return from the oil and gas industry and that the industry should not have been developed with foreign capital, and the claim that the government was shortchanging the municipalities, failed to create a significant level of interest.[99]

As the 1960s wore on, Manning opposed most of the universal social programs proposed by the federal government, an exception being the Canada Pension Plan. After retiring from the premiership, he explained himself as follows:

> [N]ow we can boast that we have the highest standard of health and hospital care of probably any industrialized nation. And that's very nice, I like that. But the trouble is, when they tell you that they always forget to say, "Yes, and we also have a $67 billion [national] debt hanging around our neck that's costing us $11.5 billion a year in interest [alone], which nobody knows how to pay." Then somebody says, "Well, I don't care about that as long as we have the services." My answer to that is, "That's nice to say now, but look ahead another ten years. Ultimately you get to the place where you *can't* borrow, your credit's gone. And then you have to face reality… ." [C.H.] Douglas's prediction of course was that the economies of the industrial world would collapse by 1980. Well, they're not too far from collapsing right now [1980]. He wasn't too far off.[100]

In 1966 the NDP won a by-election in the constituency of Pincher Creek-Crowsnest. The person elected soon made charges of corruption against two members of the government and demanded a judicial inquiry. The *Edmonton Journal* had conducted an investigation of the two men and alleged that they had committed improprieties.[101] The issue became a focal point of the 1967 election.

Shortly before the election, Manning tabled *A White Paper on Human Resources Development*. The 1960s were a time of growing social consciousness, and Manning responded to the new attitude with the White Paper, offering his views on how social change should take place in Alberta. He was also planning his retirement and wanted to provide some new initiatives for the government to explore once he was gone.[102] He had grown tired and a little bored by this time; most of his work involved updating old statutes that the party had introduced years before. The thrill of embarking on new projects and initiatives had long since passed. As he put it, "there's not the same challenge to repainting the car as to building it in the first place."[103]

The White Paper, which was drawn up with the assistance of his son Preston and some other young party supporters, argued that Alberta's economic development had been given sufficient attention in previous decades, and that the time had come to focus more on the human side of things, in particular on those groups who were suffering in spite of the general economic growth of the province. Seven case studies of areas in Alberta that

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-5164-320)

The discovery of oil at Leduc inaugurated an era of unprecedented prosperity for Albertans over which Manning, as Premier, presided. Here he is seen cutting the ribbon at the opening of an apartment of the Calgary Brewing and Malting Company. (August 25, 1960). (Photograph by W. J. Oliver, Calgary.)

were impoverished or in need of social services, including reports on a First Nations reserve and a Metis community, came with the report.[illegible] The White Paper also called for the establishment of a Human Resources Research Council that would do research on social issues and pass the results on to the government for use in setting social policy.

The general philosophy of the White Paper involved an amalgamation of free enterprise ideas, humanitarian values, and plans for the provision of social services. It advocated the creation of a "society of free and creative individuals," intentionally avoiding terms like "the great society" or "the just society," which were popular in the 1960s but for Manning had collectivist overtones. In keeping with his neo-liberalism, Manning wanted to make sure that freedom of the individual was the central theme of the document.[illegible]

Social Credit won the 1967 election with 45% of the vote, which represented a drop of 10 percentage points from the figure it had attained in 1963, although the party took 55 of 65 seats. The corruption allegations that had surfaced in 1966 may have been a factor; however, the Kirby Royal Commission of 1968 cleared the two Social Credit politicians of wrongdoing. Another influence was the presence of Peter Lougheed, the new Progressive Conservative leader, whose party took 26% of the vote and six seats. The NDP garnered 16% of the vote, but could not capture a seat.

After the 1967 election Manning was concerned about the decline in support for his party, and asked all the members of his Cabinet to submit an assessment of the campaign so he could take steps to rectify the situation.[17] This was a remarkable undertaking by a man who had just participated in his ninth consecutive successful election. Even with such an astounding record of success, he felt there was no room for complacency and that he and the party still had something to learn.

An issue that had long frustrated Manning was the failure of the Social Credit Party at the federal level. William Aberhart and others had tried to make the party a viable presence on the national scene in the 1930s and 1940s, and Manning himself had tried for decades to help the party along at the federal level. Although it made a promising showing in the national election of 1962, by the late 1960s it was in serious disarray. On the eve of his retirement, Manning concluded that the national Social Credit cause was hopeless. The only way to move forward, he suggested, was through wholesale political realignment at the national level. At the urging of his son Preston and other young party activists (and with their research assistance), he published *Political Realignment: A Challenge to Thoughtful Canadians* in an effort to change the direction of Canadian politics.[18]

Manning's idea was that the federal Progressive Conservatives should revamp themselves by becoming more of an ideological party. He suggested that they embrace "social conservatism," in effect the philosophy he had followed in Alberta since the late 1940s. He presented social conservatism as the wedding of free enterprise economic policies with a compassionate social conscience. Essentially, he wanted the PCs to become the federal version of what he considered his own provincial party to be. He believed that a social conservative party could gain the support of people who had voted Social Credit, Conservative, or even Liberal in the past. His goal was to polarize federal politics in a way that would allow voters to choose between a social conservative government and a socialist one.

Manning rushed the publication of *Political Realignment* so it could be distributed at the national Progressive Conservative Party convention of 1967, although contrary to popular belief he was not advocating a merger of his party with the Tories. "The book was not talking about party amalgamation at all," he later explained to an interviewer.[19] Manning recognized that the Conservatives were self-immolating over the issue of John Diefenbaker's leadership, and felt that this would be an opportune time for them to consider some serious restructuring. However, the leadership issue predominated at the convention, and Manning's ideas were not even discussed. A few isolated individuals asked him if he would be willing to be the leader of a revamped party, but he got no official communication from the Tories. His idea of political realignment did not excite many members of the Alberta Social Credit Party either, so the whole matter was quickly forgotten. He later said that he would have led a national social conservative party had there been a groundswell of support for his ideas.[20] He was 59 years of age, by no means too old to take on the challenge.

Ernest Manning announced his retirement plans in 1968. From his perspective, he was leaving the party in a position of strength. As he mentioned in his farewell speech, Social

Credit had 56 members in the Legislature, the same number they had had following the breakthrough election of 1935. Moreover, he had offered the party new policy and administrative directions in the White Paper and in his ideas about political realignment. He was retiring, he said, before the actual need for a new leader became evident.[110]

Shortly after his retirement, Manning did two things that came as a bit of a shock to those who had followed his career. The most surprising move, given that he had never disavowed the Social Credit doctrine on banks and the ill effects they were said to have on society, was to accept a directorship with a major Canadian bank. His actions on this issue were now speaking louder than his words. The other thing he did that surprised observers was to agree to an appointment to the Canadian Senate at the invitation of Prime Minister Trudeau. Manning had been critical of many aspects of Liberal policy, including bilingualism and biculturalism, and had expressed unfavourable assessments of the Senate itself. The appointment to the Senate, however, did not alter Manning's views. While a Senator he said that the national Liberal government offered Canadians "the most incompetent government in living memory and the worst leadership," and stated that the Senate should either be restructured or abolished.[111]

Decay and Dissolution

The Social Credit Party was unable to survive the departure of Ernest Manning. It was defeated by Peter Lougheed's Conservatives in 1971, the first election that followed Manning's retirement. The party disintegrated rapidly after that, becoming a fringe party before the 1970s were over.

There is a theory that the demise of Social Credit was inevitable in 1971 because it was an agrarian, small-town, Depression-era party that was out of touch with the new politics of the 1960s and 1970s. Social Credit, the theory goes, dug its own grave by creating a young, vibrant, educated, urban, and secular society that just could not relate to the party that had brought it into being. Its end was made all the more certain by the arrival of the young Peter Lougheed, who seemed to personify the new Alberta, in particular the new middle class of engineers, technicians, and other professionals who lived in the cities.

The popularity of this theory is not commensurate with the evidence offered to back it up.[112] For one thing, Social Credit had always had considerable support in the cities, especially in southern Alberta. In 1971 the new middle class in Alberta was still vastly outnumbered by a composite group made up of farmers, workers, and members of the lower-middle class, the groups that had provided the bulk of the support for Social Credit since 1935. Substantial opposition to Social Credit rule as measured in the popular vote was not something that started in 1967, and there was not a pattern of gradual decline in Social Credit voting as the new Alberta was created. And if Social Credit was a remnant of an earlier age by 1971, no one noticed at the time. Very few people thought the party would lose power in 1971; all the talk of the inevitable demise of the party came after the results were in. The Conservative victory was a big surprise even to Lougheed himself, who, on the afternoon of the election, remarked to a reporter, "I don't think we're going to do it."[113] The media described his party's win as a major upset.

It is possible, although not provable one way or the other, that the party could have survived the 1971 election had Manning not retired. His replacement as Premier, Harry Strom, was a decent man, but had difficulty connecting with Albertans. As an Alberta farmer put it during the 1971 campaign, "That Lougheed feller looks like he's got brains. I like old Manning, but Strom just doesn't project."[113] It may well be that Manning's retirement, rather than long-term social change, spelled the end of the party's rule.

Whatever the reality, it is clear that for the 25 years he was Premier the Social Credit Party was essentially the Manning party. He once described how he followed the "traditional" rather than the "consensus" approach to being First Minister:

> [T]he traditional process is that you call your ministers together for a policy decision. You ask for their full input… . And you hear them out. They may not all agree, but you don't ask them to make a decision. In all the years I was in government I don't think we ever took a vote in Cabinet. You don't do it that way. You hear them out, you get their input, then *you* make the judgment.[114]

Conclusion

Ernest Manning was the architect of the modern Alberta. The poor farm boy with little formal education and fundamentalist religious beliefs guided the province's transition to modernity and affluence. He built the province largely by allowing private individuals and organizations to pursue their economic self-interest. Although there was regulation, taxation, and substantial government spending, more than any other government in the country Manning's government embraced, albeit belatedly, the policies of market economics and small government. Decades after his retirement, his policies of balanced budgets, moderate taxation, and fiscal restraint became part of the conventional political wisdom in Canada. His critics are mainly those who believe in a more activist role for the state.

Manning was a worldly mystic who felt at home in both the spiritual and political realms. He was a man of virtue, but being human he was not always on the side of the angels. To take one example, while Premier he would decide on the date of an election, book all the radio time available the night before it was to be held, then announce the date of the election. This, he explained, fulfilled two purposes. "In the first place, it was your last major presentation to the entire citizenry of the province. And secondly, you had the time. Your opposition couldn't buy it—you already had it sewn up."[115] On the positive side, Manning was outspoken about his vision for Alberta and Canada. Whether one agreed with him or not, there was never any doubt about where he stood on the political and moral issues of the day.

Manning's years in office came at considerable cost to his family life. Although his wife Muriel completely supported his political work, she once remarked that the two happiest days of her life were her wedding day and the day her husband retired from politics. A life in politics did have its rewards, however. In summing up his political career, Manning said:

> I guess, taking an overview of the whole thing, when I think of what Alberta was like when we went into office in 1935, with nearly half your

> people on relief and agriculture prices in total collapse, economic conditions just indescribable, and the adverse social impacts of those conditions which were so terrible—and when you think of where this province has come from since those days, it's a tremendous change. And to have had the privilege of being associated with it in that period of transformation gives you a lot of satisfaction.[117]

At the same time, Manning looked back with some sadness on what had transpired in Alberta and the rest of world since he became politically active. He believed that all the material progress that he had worked so hard to achieve was ultimately futile. He said after his retirement from the premiership:

> I think the thing that disturbs me most in the trends as I've seen them in the province is that all the material affluence that we have experienced here as compared with other parts of the country has not improved the quality of our society. It's worse. It hasn't made our people any happier; they're not as happy as they were in other years. It always makes a person a bit sad to see that… . [I]t disturbs and saddens me today to see the change that has taken place in public attitudes, immorality, disrespect for law, violence—all of these things are a deterioration in our social conditions.[118]

Manning's fundamental belief was that the only way out of the morass is through spiritual revival:

> [T]he spiritual regeneration of an individual is the only thing that can offset the natural inclinations to destruction and negative, evil things that are in human nature. The potential is there. The divine power of God to change the nature of people is no less today than it ever was. It's just that man has turned his back on God to such an extent that we don't cash in on the potential that's there.[119]

Ernest Manning died on February 19, 1996, in Calgary.

Notes

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Harry Strom 1968-1971

JOHN J. BARR

Harry Strom, 1968–1971

The Last Socred

If Frank Capra had made a movie about Harry Strom, it might have looked like this:

> MR. STROM GOES TO EDMONTON: The heartwarming but bittersweet Canadian saga of a humble but honest man of the soil who goes to the provincial capital full of high ideals and grapples unsuccessfully with cynical power-brokers, media-savvy ambitious challengers, and enthusiastic but inexperienced supporters. Cast: James Stewart (Harry Strom), Henry Fonda (Ernest Manning), Richard Thomas (Preston Manning), Alan Ladd (Peter Lougheed), Glen Ford (Bob Clark), George Kennedy (Don Getty), Sam Jaffe (Orvis Kennedy), Broderick Crawford (Raymond Reierson), and Walter Brennan (Alf Hooke). Very black and white. Running time: 33 months.

In Canadian politics, it would seem, it is a risky business to inherit the mantle of a great man, since few of our "successors" have "succeeded." The litany sounds like it came from the Book of Genesis: Tommy Douglas begat Woodrow Lloyd, Duff Roblin begat Walter Weir, Brian Mulroney begat Kim Campbell, Bill Vander Zalm begat Rita Johnson, Mike Harris begat Ernie Eves. And of course Ernest Manning begat Harry Strom.

All these unfortunates inherited a political machine, were resoundingly defeated in their first test as leader, and became historical footnotes. For the reason that lost causes are often more interesting than winning ones, I believe that many of these failures deserve more attention and are, in fact, significant historical figures in their own right. Their futile quests for legitimacy contain some of our best human drama and throw an interesting spotlight on the political dynamics of their times.

The End of the Manning Era

The year was 1968. Social Credit had been in power in Alberta for 33 years. Ernest Manning was at the top of his game. And he was about to do something that few politicians in his position are wise enough to do: step down without being pushed.

There were several reasons why he had come to this decision. To begin with, Manning was in politics by happenstance. As the trusted assistant to William Aberhart at the Prophetic Bible Institute in Calgary, he had only entered public life because Aberhart did. When Aberhart died suddenly in 1943, Manning inherited his mantle because he was so closely linked to the old man, because he had no enemies, and because there was no obvious alternative.

Manning surprised many. Working carefully, the bright, bland young man grew into a politician who ultimately guided the province through six general elections and built an administration legendary for its efficiency and integrity. Now, however, he was tired. He had been Premier for a quarter of a century. Politics, per se, held little joy for him. Deep down he was a shy intellectual driven mostly by ideas. He was, he said privately, "tired of trying to talk people out of ideas I talked them into twenty years ago."

Above all, Manning was a realist. Out in the larger world the winds of change were beginning to blow; even on the prairies, they were riffling the short grass. South of the border, the anti-Vietnam War movement was about to topple Lyndon Johnson from the presidency. In France, young leftists were preparing to storm Paris. In Ottawa, Pierre Elliott Trudeau was minister of Justice, and there was a growing movement to make him the next Prime Minister.[1]

Even the once-dormant Alberta Legislature was coming alive. There was now a small but effective opposition led by an attractive, ambitious young lawyer from Calgary, Peter Lougheed. Lougheed came from an old, wealthy political family. He was a Harvard Business School graduate and a recently minted lawyer, tutored in business by Calgary's wealthy and secretive Mannix family. He had studied John F. Kennedy's career and had shaped himself in Kennedy's image (athletic, young, always running, full of energy, and very, very television-oriented). CBC Alberta had already done a television special on this rising star. True, he was short. But—his supporters were quick to point out—he had briefly returned punts for the Edmonton Eskimos back in the early 1950s. So he was no sissy.

Social Credit, on the other hand, had been in power since the middle of the Great Depression … through the Second World War … through the postwar boom … through Diefenbaker and Pearson … through Eisenhower and Kennedy, and now Lyndon Johnson. Many Albertans had never known another government. The prospect of changing governments had been … unthinkable. The government was weighed down with its old habits and old faces.

Manning could feel the faint tremors of change. Sometime that winter,[2] he called together a small group—Treasurer Anders Aalborg, Industry minister Russ Patrick, Education minister Randy McKinnon, and Agriculture minister Harry Strom and told them he planned to step down. He said he would endorse no one.

The group went away and huddled. Aalborg was the senior minister and wanted the job, but had heart problems. At one point the little group turned to Strom, who only laughed nervously and shook his head.

A small group of Preston Manning's friends—Erick Schmidt, Don Hamilton, and Owen Anderson, who later formed the nucleus of Social Credit's "Young Turks"[3]—went to see the Premier and urged him to support Preston for the leadership. Their thinking went like this. Preston was well known in the province. He was a polished regular speaker on the Premier's "Back to the Bible Hour" radio broadcasts and had run—unsuccessfully but not dismally—for Social Credit in the 1965 federal election. He had political ideas: he had written a significant part of Ernest Manning's 1967 book *Political Realignment*. He had just graduated from the University of Alberta with an economics degree after starting out in honours physics. He was bright, articulate, and had the magic of the family name.

The Premier heard them out quietly and then shook his head. Preston, he said, was too young and too inexperienced in business.[4] "Don't be in too big a rush," he added cryptically. The group went away and analyzed the other possible candidates. They decided collectively that the best alternative was Harry Strom.

Each of them knew Harry, at least a little; they all liked him. An upright but extremely affable man, Strom had done a good job in the Agriculture portfolio, he had deep roots in the Social Credit heartland of southern Alberta, and he was well known and well liked in farm circles. Vitally important to the Young Turks, Harry was open to new political ideas. Although a Bible-believing member of the Evangelical Free Church, he did not wear it on his sleeve. He was just a tall, good-natured guy whom everybody liked.

Strom was born on July 7, 1914, and was christened Harry Edwin. His parents, Nels H. Strom and Elna O.M. Ekensteen, were second-generation Swedish-Canadians. He was educated at Ballman and Burdett public schools and then at East Calgary High School and Calgary Technical High School where he studied mechanics. In 1931, after his father died, he returned to Burdett to help his mother run the family farm. In 1938 he married Ruth Johnson of Bow Island. They went on to have six children: Howard, Faith, Beverly, Brian, Ronald, and Arlene.

After serving on several local school, municipal, and agricultural boards, he was elected to the Legislature in 1955 and was re-elected three times. In 1967 Manning appointed him Chairman of the Human Resources Development Authority, a Cabinet committee that coordinated all the people-service ministries, including Education and Social Development. It was at HRDA that Harry first met the Young Turks and impressed them with his openness to renewal.

Harry had to be coaxed to run. A week before he was to formally announce his candidacy, Harry asked Preston to visit him. He told Preston that if "the younger fellows" wanted to put forward a younger candidate—such as Preston himself—someone more oriented to the future—he would gladly step aside and attempt to sell that person's candidacy to the "older crowd" in the Cabinet and the party.

Preston told Harry that there was no such candidate in the wings and that Harry had the confidence of the Young Turks.[1]

The Leadership Race

When it came to running a leadership race, Social Credit was a tad rusty, to put it mildly. Technically the party had never actually *had* a leadership race. Aberhart started the Social Credit League in 1934 and remained leader until his unexpected death in 1943. During his administration his leadership was never challenged; it would have been unthinkable. And when Aberhart died, Ernest Manning was chosen leader by the Legislative caucus. Therefore, the fact that none of Strom's young supporters had ever organized a party leadership race mattered little: neither had anybody else in Social Credit.

The group pulled together a campaign committee in which Bob Clark, Manning's minister of Youth, acted as liaison to the Cabinet and Don Hamilton was made "general manager." Strom had four opponents:

> *Gordon Taylor*, the tireless and well-respected Highways minister. A lifelong bachelor active in youth work, Taylor was honest, articulate, and hard working. His

> weakness was that he was seen as a single-issue politician with no known policy views on anything other than transportation.
>
> *Raymond Reierson*, minister of Telephones. Reierson had successfully managed several portfolios and was seen as articulate and intelligent but cranky and a loner.
>
> *Edgar Gerhart*, MLA. The son of an able and tough Municipal Affairs minister under Manning in the 1940s and 1950s, Gerhart was one of only two lawyers sitting on the government side of the Legislature. He was seen as intelligent and possibly an urban-based voice of renewal. His weaknesses were seen as his lack of Cabinet experience and his physiognomy (he was a fat man).
>
> *Walter Buck*, MLA. A Fort Saskatchewan dentist in his mid-30s, Buck was cast as the campaign's dark horse. No one was sure how seriously to take him. While he was a relatively new face in Social Credit and was moderately articulate, party insiders noted that he had sat on the back benches since 1963 without making much of an impression.

Manning announced his retirement plans September 27, 1968, and the leadership convention was set for Edmonton in early December.

From day one it was Strom versus The Others. Strom had an organization and a campaign theme, which he defined as "the social development of Alberta." He phrased this as "the creation of conditions, and the reform of existing institutions, with the objective of building a province where all our citizens may develop socially, economically, and politically … so that we may become a truly free and creative people." It was a theme designed to send a message of moderate policies and cautious reform to nonaligned voters without offending party traditionalists.

Candidate meetings were sponsored around the province. Turnout was light. Anyone looking for evidence of a rush of newcomers into the party was disappointed. In late October local constituency associations met to choose delegates.

As the campaign moved into November, Strom unveiled the first of several policy initiatives, calling for a commission to study the future of Alberta cities and develop new guidelines for bold urban planning to address needs for parks, recreation, pollution control, and urban transportation. He followed this with 13 major proposals in the period leading up to the convention. They included programmed budgeting, a citizen's committee on constitutional reform, Head Start programs for disadvantaged kids, a commission to write a 30-year plan for education, a broader role for backbenchers, and the opening of a Premier's Office in Calgary to make government more accessible to southern Albertans.

None of these proposals emanated from Harry himself: all of them were written by the Young Turks. If the team had doubts about how deeply Harry was committed to these ideas, they kept them to themselves.

In mid-autumn their doubts were strengthened by Harry's noncommittal reaction to the proposals of a grassroots renewal committee headed by young Socred lawyer Bill Downton of Calgary.[8] Downton's committee consulted with over 300 Calgary-area people and recommended relaxation of blue laws, redistribution to increase urban representation, traveling Cabinet meetings around the province, an urban ombudsman in every city, removal of education costs from the property tax, subsidized day-care centres, job training for "deserted wives," mental health reform, no-fault auto insurance, and, finally, creation of a multi-party "iconoclasts' club" of independent thinkers to meet with the Premier at regular intervals and subject government policy to analysis and review.

In the spring a poll of party members had found that 9.79% favored Gordon Taylor as Premier versus 5.3% for Strom and 3.64% for Reierson; a huge number—half the sample—had no opinion. By mid-November Strom's team had the sense that Harry had built a narrow lead. By the eve of the convention, Strom had accumulated a formidable list of backers, including Anders Aalborg and four other Cabinet ministers, and had run the most vigorous and professional campaign. And yet, as delegates began to arrive at Edmonton's Jubilee Auditorium on December 4, there was considerable tension and certainly no sense that anybody had a lock on the leadership.

A giant red and white Ray Reierson billboard had been parked next to the front door, and in the midst of the rotunda a rock band was thumping it out for Ed Gerhart. Incredulous convention delegates—small-town hardware merchants with steel-rimmed glasses, schoolmarms from Rocky Mountain House, and wind-burned farmers from Mundare—circled the bandstand like a group of villagers inspecting a crashed UFO. Inside the auditorium itself, barely audible, a German oompah band was trying to get a snake-dance going.

In the back rooms, Socred Party officials were agitated. Longtime party secretary Orvis Kennedy had gotten word that the Young Socreds—who always met separately a day ahead of the parent party—were planning to introduce a resolution advocating the legalization of marijuana. There was a discreet but firm intervention: the resolution was shelved.[1]

At the last minute the candidate list grew by one: Alfred J. Hooke, one of the last survivors of 1935 and a man who had been in and out of the Cabinet for years, announced a surprise candidacy. A bantam rooster of a man, Alf flayed welfare abuses, raised dark questions about the loyalty of the "Stromites," and appealed for a return to "traditional values."

The next day, following the speeches and some rather self-conscious floor demonstrations, the vote took place. Ernest Manning sat impassively in the front row of the Auditorium, his face betraying nothing. Ballots were passed out by Social Credit ladies dressed in green Alberta Tartan blazers; results were posted on a huge electronic tote board borrowed from the Northlands racetrack.

The first round drew a roar:

Strom	814	Buck	184
Taylor	282	Gerhart	137
Reierson	255	Hooke	38

Strom was just short of a majority. A frantic stop-Strom movement ensued as candidates met in back rooms.

Gerhart was out; Buck was pressured to throw his votes to Taylor or Reierson, but refused to do either. Reierson strode to the stage to make an announcement, but Orvis Kennedy stepped in his way, and the two had a muffled shouting match until Reierson pushed past and shouted, "I never thought I'd live to see the day that a Social Credit candidate would be denied the right to speak to his own supporters." He said he supported Gordon Taylor.

As the second ballot was counted, it was clear Strom had the momentum. Fifteen minutes from the end of the ballot the numbers read:

Strom	915
Taylor	606
Buck	147

Bedlam broke out and the stage was mobbed. After midnight Harry Strom went back to his suburban bungalow in Edmonton and went to bed with a deep feeling of aloneness and a crushing sense of responsibility. Was he ready to act out his destiny?

Taking Power

Thirty-three years of Socred rule had created a complex, invisible alliance between Ernest Manning and a handful of civil service mandarins. Manning supplied the big ideas; the mandarins managed the administration. Backbench MLAs were given minor roles and were expected to be seen and not heard, at least on any issue of substance. Now Manning was gone. The mandarins were still there and had tradition and technical knowledge at their service. But there was a vacuum at the political centre, a vacuum into which the new Premier, his staff, and the leftover Cabinet moved uncertainly.

Harry Strom had inherited an established business with a solid clientele and well-stocked shelves. Peter Lougheed had opened a new store down the street, but so far there were no lineups at his door.

If Social Credit hoped to win a new lease on life, it needed the new Premier to be his own man and take charge. Instead, Strom simply slipped into the Legislature without anybody noticing. From the first days of the administration, Strom's young advisors were energized but worried.

The struggle began with obscure backroom skirmishes. Manning's old appointments secretary, Russ Shepherd, wrestled with Harry's Chief of Staff, Don Hamilton, for control of the Premier's schedule. Owen Anderson struggled with various civil servants for control of the Premier's speechwriting. Various political advisors began to wrestle with the mandarins for the inside track to their ministers. And the Young Turks, meeting as an informal caucus, began to push Cabinet to embrace an agenda of change.

The tone for later frustrations was set in the first week. Hamilton and Anderson began weekly strategy meetings with the Premier at Government House. The agenda was drawn from Harry's campaign platform. The meetings were convivial, but rarely led to action. Harry seemed to think that talking about decisions was a form of action. Sensing this, Hamilton settled on a tactic: each week he brought the previous week's exact agenda, changing only the date. Harry never seemed to notice. He commented they were having "excellent discussions."

Hamilton urged Harry to call an early election to win a mandate for change. "We have no mandate now," he argued. "Don't pretend that we do." Harry was unmoved. "This is how we've always done it," he said.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-3326-2)

Official photograph of Harry Strom, Premier of Alberta (c. 1968).

Owen Anderson tabled a proposal for a radical overhaul of the Social Credit League. He proposed that the party free itself from the albatross of fund raising by using its credit to buy an office building that would throw off cash for campaigning. He proposed that the party purchase computer facilities and begin computerizing every piece of pertinent political data in the province—voting trends, demographic shifts, results of public opinion polls.[10] Most of these proposals died—some quickly in outright "no's"; some died over a period of time as they were ground down to fine powder by committees or study groups.[11]

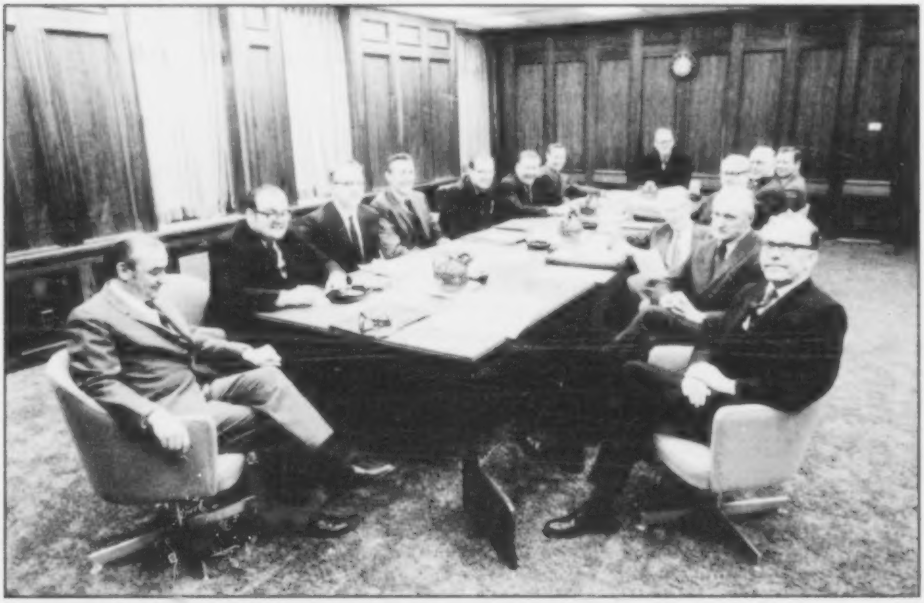
In the first year the party actually managed to recruit a significant number of new people, but the government's refusal to give them a voice or listen to their recommendations sent many of them away bitter and disillusioned.

One area where Harry Strom did put his stamp on government was in his management of the Premier's office. It is hard to believe in today's political environment where First Ministers have massive staffs, fat pensions, security guards, and executive jets that Strom usually traveled to federal-provincial conferences with one or two staffers and, to save money, stayed at the old Skyline Hotel in Ottawa, where he took his breakfasts at the basement cafeteria because there he could order pea soup and bread for 25¢.

But then, this was a man who once changed his clothes in the front seat of the government car on his way to a speech, while Owen Anderson attempted to distract a somewhat dazed female Japanese journalist who was sitting in the back.

Strom dreaded speaking from a text to large audiences or from a script to a television camera. For his speechwriters, listening to him deliver a speech was exquisite agony. A typical Strom speech would have three or four major points, each supported by what the speechwriters hoped would be a memorable one-liner. More often than not, when Harry reached the one-liner he would hesitate, then either skip over it or try to rewrite it in full flight, managing to mangle it.

Frustrated, Hamilton and Anderson waited until Harry was about to give a speech at the University of Alberta and then—knowing that he had not even glanced at the speech the night before—handed him his speech folder as he went to the podium. When he opened the folder, Strom found only a short note in big, bold letters, saying, "Sock it to 'em, Harry!" He went ashen, at which point an aide rushed forward, holding the real speech. After that, he began reading speech drafts before giving them.



GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-2864-5402)

The first meeting of Harry Strom's Cabinet. Present at the inauguration of Premier Harry Strom's Calgary office were, from left to right around the table: Ambrose Holowach, Provincial Secretary; Edgar Gerhart, Attorney-General; J.D. Henderson, Health minister; Raymond Ratzlaff, Industry and Tourism minister; Raymond Reierson, Labour and Telephone minister; F.C. Colborne, Municipal Affairs minister; Ray Speaker, Social Development minister; Harry Strom, Premier of Alberta; Robert Clark, Education and Youth minister; A.O. Fimrite, minister Without Portfolio; A.R. Patrick, Mines and Minerals minister; Doctor J.D. Ross, Lands and Forests minister; A.W. Ludwig, Public Works minister; A.O. Aalborg, Provincial Treasurer. (Photo published in the Calgary Herald, *January 13, 1970.)*

Strom's inability to deliver an effective speech became symptomatic of his larger failure to lead or inspire change. Over time it became apparent that he saw himself not as a leader but as a kind of non-executive board chairman, preoccupied with maintaining "unity" in the Cabinet and caucus, rather than driving change or pulling people together behind his leadership. The result was that, between 1969 and 1971, the Strom administration delivered highly innovative, effective, and efficient government … which, thanks to its communication failures, put most people straight to sleep.

What undid Social Credit was the fact that in Canadian politics, political substance had already begun to fight its losing battle with political style. The Kennedy Revolution—the transformation of politics into media management—had already been underway for eight years when Harry Strom came to power.

The more important policy achievements of the Strom administration included:

> *Creation of Alberta's first ministry of the Environment.* Alberta was one of the first provinces in Canada to recognize the importance of environmental protection. Social Credit created the ministry, and Strom installed, as its first minister, a smart, tough-minded newcomer, MLA Jim Henderson.

DOORWAY
TO
THEIR FUTURE

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-2864-5652)

Premier Harry Strom officially opens the new expansion of Providence Creche Day Care Centre, Calgary, Alberta. Costing $49,940, the expansion provided another 1,337 square feet of room for the centre's 80 children. (Published in the Calgary Herald, *June 6, 1970.)*

Expansion of the Alberta Service Corps. The Service Corps was inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal and Kennedy's Peace Corps, and later inspired the federal government's Company of Young Canadians and Katimavik. It gave hundreds of youth a chance to earn summer wages while working on environmental remediation projects and in mental hospitals. For reasons that were never clear, it was one of the first programs the Conservatives dumped when they came to power.

Creation of a socially relevant school curriculum. In the mid-1960s, the first "drug revolution" was powering its way across North America, propelled by rock 'n roll and the media. Even in small-town Alberta, kids were experimenting with anything they could smoke, swallow, snort, or, in extreme cases, shoot. The writer and Education minister Bob Clark persuaded the government that the education system needed to find new ways to induce responsible behaviour, since traditional family and social controls were obviously powerless to do so. The government commissioned two films on drugs and force-fed them into the school curriculum.[11]

Introduction of a publicly funded kindergarten system. The Strom government initiated a "request for proposals" (RFP) process to give community groups and corporations a chance to submit proposals for a trial kindergarten program in Edmonton and Calgary. The Calgary project was a unique partnership between an inner-city community association and staff from Mount Royal College. This innovation, introduced against the opposition of ministry of Education bureaucrats, held great promise for introducing new thinking into the education system. Alberta was Canada's first government to utilize the RFP system in government, and the Alberta kindergarten pilot project preceded the introduction of "public-private partnerships" in Canada by almost 30 years.[11]

Consultative long-term educational planning involving the whole community. Under the direction of Dr. Walter Worth of the University of Alberta, a Commission on Educational Planning travelled the province, engaging the whole community in the process of thinking through what the educational system should be. The Worth report, *A Choice of Futures*, was a multi-media extravaganza that set the tone and direction for education in Alberta for the next generation.

Creation of some of Canada's first distance-learning facilities—Athabasca University and ACCESS, the province's educational television network.

Creation of a whole new channel of post-secondary educational opportunity, the Alberta college system. The Socreds took the province's "junior colleges" and brought them into a college system, administered by a new Colleges Commission. The Commission stimulated the creation of whole new institutions like Grant MacEwan College in Edmonton. This creation of this new educational channel further opened up what was already one of Canada's better educational systems and made it more responsive to people it had long shut out.

The professionalization of intergovernment relations. The brainchild of Owen Anderson, the province's new Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat for the first time put the management of relations with the federal government and other provinces onto a professional basis with proper staffing, research, and analysis. This initiative enlisted the better brains of the province's academy and provided a much more forceful and intelligent exposition of the Alberta point of view on a national level.

The Last Hurrah

By the autumn of 1970, the calendar was forcing Harry Strom to begin preparing for the next election. The government's legal mandate—Manning's mandate, really, since Harry had refused to seek one of his own in the early days of power—was due to expire in the summer of 1972. Tradition decreed that governments not run out their mandate the full five years, since they were usually accused of cowardice for doing so and were trounced. Tradition also ruled out winter as an election period. By a process of elimination, that left an election window between May and September 1971. After much internal debate (would spring be better because farmers are optimistic about the future, or worse because they would resent interference with seeding?), it was agreed late summer would be best.

Three changes were set in motion: the recruitment of new candidates, an attempt to makeover Harry's lackluster image, and the creation of an election planning group. Recruitment of new candidates was driven mostly by Harry's advisors and a group of supporters in the Social Credit League. Strom's advisors prodded him to begin recruiting high-profile "new face" candidates; he dragged his feet, protesting that he would not make "deals" with newcomers. His sensitivity on this point surfaced during the nominating meetings. At one meeting, where a popular young Edmonton alderman, Cec Purves, was running against a Socred war-horse, Dr. J. Donovan Ross, Harry suddenly blurted out—apropos of nothing—"You know, I haven't promised Cec anything." (To the shock of almost everyone, Purves lost the nomination.)

The image makers kept trying to fashion Harry a more exciting public face. The Calgary office of the Jerry Goodis advertising agency was commissioned to produce a half-hour film. Shot mostly in the Strom living room, it was a disaster. Scowling like everyone's cranky old grandfather, Harry told the voters why they could not have what they wanted (there was no money) and mouthed banalities like, "My philosophy of government is to do the very best I can." The film was shown once, then quickly locked away.

A later film, produced by Edmonton entertainment personality Tommy Banks, was somewhat more successful. It showed Harry on horseback, where he looked very much at home; flying over the new Alberta Resources Railway; and walking through the old one-room school of his youth, musing on how the province had changed and how important it was to move with the times.

A centralized committee of party and government officials was struck to plan and manage the campaign. A campaign budget of $580,000 was proposed, a substantial increase over any previous effort. The campaign slogan was, "Together we build." Strategically, the committee recommended that only $72,000 be spent on television advertising—perhaps because the organizers feared for Harry's ability to perform in that medium.[14]

Almost in spite of Harry, the drive to attract new candidates moved forward, and by the call of the election 37 of the 75 Socred candidates were new faces, some of them impressive candidates—Don Hamilton (running against Lougheed's lieutenant, Don Getty), developer Lou Letourneau, popular school principal Alex Romaniuk, Calgary alderman George Ho Lem, activist Roman Catholic priest Father Pat O'Byrne, and former Calgary Stampeder great Don Luzzi.

Pressure to name an election date grew. In the later winter, Owen Anderson commissioned a poll that left the Cabinet in shock: it showed that if an election were held immediately, Lougheed would have an edge over the Socreds with 31% of the vote to Strom's 28%, and 25% undecided. Respondents characterized Harry as "honest" but "boring," "a poor speaker" and "uninteresting." Lougheed was characterized as "a man of ideas," "wants the best for the people," and "sincere."

Worse yet, someone leaked the main findings of the survey to the *Lethbridge Herald*. Miraculously, other media in the province failed to pick up the story. The self-doubts inflicted by the survey results were reinforced when a series of incumbent governments fell across the country. Ross Thatcher went down to defeat in Saskatchewan, along with Jean-Jacques Bertrand in Quebec, Louis Robichaud in New Brunswick, and Walter Weir in Manitoba.[15]

Clearly Social Credit was fighting for its life. Having said that, the government was not without assets, and there was every chance an effective campaign could still get the government through one more election.

Lougheed seized the initiative, calling for an election with a ringing speech in Calgary. The Tories' slogan, he said, would be "NOW!" In words reminiscent of Jack Kennedy ("let's get this country moving again") and New York Mayor John Lindsey ("he is fresh and they are tired"), Lougheed cried:

> These times of turmoil—of protest—of change—of confrontation—require a government party NOW where its members place people before party… . [W]e also look to the future convinced this province could be doing very much better… . [It needs] a party of the future, not of the past… . [T]he [Socreds] have convinced themselves that Alberta's development had been due to their efforts, not due to the fortunate presence of natural resources in the province.

New television commercials were commissioned; Harry began a series of 60-second radio "reports from your Premier." His halting delivery probably reinforced the very impression the programs were designed to change. Behind the scenes, efforts began to team up with the provincial Liberals. Former provincial Liberal Leader Jack Lowery joined the Socred organizing committee, secretly proposing that the two parties unite. Strom demurred, saying that any Liberals who wanted to join Social Credit would be welcome to do so. It was probably doubtful that a formal alliance with the Liberals would have helped Social Credit much, since the Liberals' fortunes had been declining for years.[16]

By late June the Socred organization was in place, but the platform was a mess. In contrast, Ernest Manning had always built each of his election campaigns around a single dramatic policy. In 1955 he had promised payment of a cash "oil dividend" to every adult in Alberta. In 1959 he had promised senior citizens' lodges in every community. In 1963 he had announced a voluntary medicare plan for the province. Under Harry Strom this tradition died. The Election Task Force had submitted a host of bold policy ideas, which the Cabinet had insisted on having priced out and evaluated, partly for administrative "workability." Even on the eve of the most difficult election they had ever faced, Socred Cabinet ministers could not stop thinking like departmental administrators instead of politicians. What emerged from this "Ordeal By Cabinet Committee" was a watered-down pastiche that lacked a single animating big idea.[17]

On July 22 Strom rode a brown-and-white horse down Jasper Avenue as part of Edmonton's Klondike Days Parade. After the parade he caught Lougheed by surprise by announcing an election would be held August 30. Three days later Peter Lougheed got the drop on the government by announcing his platform first. Its most eye-catching plank was free medicare for those over 65. The same day Harry apparently had not yet read the ink-was-barely-dry Socred platform, because he told the *Calgary Albertan* that free medicare for people over 65 was too expensive: "Where would we find the money?"

Two days later the Socreds announced their medicare plank—medicare for a dollar a month for those over 65 receiving the Old Age Pension and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Editorial reaction to the Social Credit platform was lukewarm. Speaking of the Socred home-buyers' plan, the *Edmonton Journal* commented: "Twelve months ago Mr. Strom said we couldn't afford all this and now the money is suddenly available. This has stretched the government's credibility."

In southern Alberta, a sign count fed the impression that the Socreds were still secure in most ridings south of Calgary. North of Calgary, the Socreds were like an old bear, snappy and dangerous but not as fast or as smart as he used to be, hoping to eke out one more winter on his meager supply of fat.

For those who will live and die by it, an election campaign is an emotional roller coaster in which campaign staff and candidates live on adrenalin, their emotions frayed by hopes too high and fears too great. Rumors abound; passions are pumped. In the Socred back rooms, people said Lougheed was in trouble: he was spending more time in southern Alberta because he was afraid of losing his own seat; the Tories' proposal to sell 49% of Alberta Government Telephones was hurting them.

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA-2864-19587)

Premier Harry Strom opens the campaign for the 1971 election at the Calgary Airport. (Published in the Calgary Herald, *July 23, 1971.)*

Out on the hustings, Lougheed was drawing good crowds, exciting people with his style. One reporter wrote:

> Lougheed bounds off his bus like a boxer answering the bell. He walks so fast that this reporter has lost five pounds trying to keep up to him as he visits every store on main street, shakes hands with everyone walking around, and then run-walks back to the bus. Once he even raced a group of kids down the street.

At a meeting in Daysland, population 700, Lougheed drew 300. Meanwhile, Socred meetings were drawing disappointing crowds. Down the highway the Strom campaign arrived in several small towns to find that local organizers had dropped the ball: no one was waiting. Despite this, one Cabinet minister told insiders he had it on reliable authority that a Tory strategy meeting had recommended that Lougheed be downplayed.

Remember Alberta's history, some people whispered: the province has a way of electing governments by landslides and then, eventually, turning them out by landslides.

Nine days before the election, the *Edmonton Journal* interviewed 50 people at random on Jasper Avenue: 32% said they would vote Tory, 24% Socred, 14% NDP, and 2% Liberal. Yet—strangely—only three of the 50 thought the Tories would win.

Socred strategists wondered: what happens if masses of people vote Tory because they want a stronger opposition? (This nightmare came to life.)

Days before election day, the Socred campaign team was swept by an exciting rumour: JAPEX was about to be announced! The Japan Petroleum Development Corporation had

SOURCE: JOHN J. BARR

Premier Harry Strom shaking hands with the author's young daughter, 1971.

been talking to the government, off and on, for years about investing in a huge new plant in the Alberta oil sands. Now a "reliable source" in the party said the Premier and Russ Patrick were in negotiations with JAPEX and an announcement was imminent! It would mean thousands of jobs. It would mean millions in investment. In all events, it never happened.

More and more hopes were pinned on the two monster rallies planned for Edmonton and Calgary for the last week of the campaign. The Edmonton rally took place August 25. Edmonton Liberal and flamboyant showman Joe Shoctor had been hired to organize it, and he did not disappoint. By 8 p.m. the Jubilee Auditorium was full—for a party that had had troubles filling rooms, it was a Socred miracle. Most of the Edmonton candidates brought in 200 supporters each—a good sign in itself. The Strutters Drum Corps electrified the place with their close-order marching drill.

Harry gave a workmanlike speech that revisited his campaign themes, and then the podium went to Ernest Manning, who gave the speech that Harry should have given and that the crowd was itching for: a stemwinder that brought the crowd to its feet. Calling Lougheed "a Madison Avenue glamour boy with the charm of an Avon Lady," Manning said, "People have the right to keep a government as long as they desire. If it doesn't perform, four years is too long. If it continues to serve the interests of the people, there is no logical argument why it should not continue indefinitely."

It was a high moment, but the next night hopes fell. In Calgary, in the Social Credit heartland, the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium was barely half full. And the next night, in the same building, Lougheed drew 4,000 people to a noisy, enthusiastic Conservative rally. The next day the *Edmonton Journal* came out for the Tories, something it had not done in living memory.

August 30 dawned hot and clear across the province, a day made for a record turnout. Peter Lougheed telephoned the sitting Tory MLAs and found them subdued. To one aide he said, "Well, I don't think we made it." Harry Strom toured Edmonton campaign offices, talked on the phone with party officials, and went home, with a deep sense of apprehension, to have dinner with his family.

At 8:00 the television networks came on the air, and for about 15 minutes there was an awkward lull while everyone speculated, waiting for the first polls. For the anxious, tense Socreds, the early numbers were not reassuring: small Tory leads in many Edmonton ridings. As the numbers built, the trend held.

In Whitemud Don Getty had a good lead on Don Hamilton and the lead was widening. Even in ridings where the Socreds felt secure, like Parkallen and Norwood, the Tories had opened up sizable leads. Socred party workers desperately telephoned the returning officers: surely there were errors in the numbers?

There were no errors. At 8:25 CFRN-TV anchorman Bruce Hogel said, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, we may be viewing a major upset tonight." The dread in Socred offices was palpable.

A pattern was emerging. The early Socred popular vote was still high, several points off the 45% the party had won in 1967. (By the end of the count, Social Credit would actually increase its vote total from four years earlier.)

Ominously the NDP vote had dropped from 15% to 10%, and even more ominously the Liberal vote was melting down—from 11% to 1%. Lougheed was running at about 46%, and while deep southern Alberta—Baptist and Mormon country—still looked Socred, Calgary was collapsing (10 Tory seats to 5 Socred) and Edmonton was a disaster area, with only a handful of Socreds even in the running.

By 9:30 the scene at the Jubilee Auditorium, where the Socreds had set up their election-night offices, was a shambles. Women were crying; white-faced men stared at the appalling numbers on a large chalkboard on the stage, desperately looking for some sign of a turnaround. The Tories were ahead or declared winners in every Edmonton seat.

Someone handed Ruth Strom a bouquet of roses, and in the midst of it Harry Strom stepped forward, thanked everyone for their help, and began to concede the election. The Tories were ahead or elected in 49 seats, Social Credit was ahead or leading in 25, and one seat was still doubtful. Outside, in the corridor, a television monitor was showing scenes of jubilation from Tory headquarters in Calgary.

Harry and Ruth quickly left the building. Mannix Corporation volunteered its executive aircraft to fly them home to Medicine Hat. On its return trip, the plane picked up Peter Lougheed in Calgary and flew him to the capital.

It had been a hot, clear day, but now, around midnight, the sky was scudding with black clouds, and a cold wind was blowing out of the north. Alberta summers are like that.

It was only August, but for Harry Strom and his party it was almost winter.

The Aftermath

On September 10 Harry Strom tendered his resignation as Premier. He served as leader of the Opposition for a time and resigned as leader of the Social Credit Party in 1972.

In that year the Socreds held another leadership race. Most of the new people who had joined Social Credit as part of Strom's renewal movement had left, leaving only the party's dwindling, aged rural base and a ragtag collection of fundamentalists. In an eerie precursor to the Christian Right's attempted takeover of the Reform Party years later, the Socred "hard core" threw away any remaining chance the party had to rebuild by choosing as their leader a lightweight—fundamentalist Werner Schmidt. Within a year, Social Credit was history.

In 1975 Harry Strom left politics to return to farming and his volunteer work with the Evangelical Free Church, devoting much of his time to the ministry of the Hope Mission in Edmonton. He served on the board of directors and was chairman of the building committee of that organization. He received several honorary doctorates of law and died in Edmonton on October 2, 1984. He was buried in Medicine Hat.

With the benefit of 30 years of perspective, what is to be summed up about Harry Strom?

The verdicts of politics are harsh. He lacked vision and had no talent for tactics. It is true he inherited an old ship encrusted with barnacles. But it was a ship that could still run with the wind, if properly steered.

It must be said that he never aspired to power; arguably, he only ran for Premier because other people urged him to. He had no hunger for power, and he was poorly equipped to manage it. And his nemesis, Peter Lougheed, was his opposite: an ambitious, well-educated, confident establishment man who believed his whole destiny was to take command.

If Strom was a disappointment as a political leader, a man who dropped the ball when the game could still have been won—and he was all of that—it must also be said that he had very fine qualities as a man. He was kind, considerate, and scrupulously honest. He treated all people with respect and did not toady to the rich and powerful. He was authentic and fun and—unlike the grim urban technocrats and puffed-up apparatchiks around Peter Lougheed—never took himself too seriously. By contrast, within a year of taking office Lougheed and his people were already naming parks and public buildings after themselves.

This kind and gentle man was unprepared by temperament, experience, or education for the task of leading a government, especially one that desperately needed change. The dilemma in which he found himself when he became leader was dramatized in his very first Cabinet meeting. After an hour of listening to his colleagues refer to him as "Premier," he sighed wistfully and said, "Can't it just be plain 'Harry' anymore?"

Notes

1. Arguably, the decade the media came to call "the Sixties" did not actually arrive in Canada until about 1965.
2. Years later the participants were unclear on the exact date.
3. Schmidt and Anderson were graduate students; Hamilton a businessman and part-time United Church minister.
4. He may have had another reason. In a conversation in the summer of 2003, Preston Manning told the writer that his father had serious doubts whether Social Credit would be re-elected.
5. Years later Preston said, "There aren't many politicians who are one week away from announcing the commencement of their climb to the top of the greasy poll, who would pause, look around, and sincerely ask whether there was any one better qualified, and offer to defer to their candidacy. But that was the kind of guy Harry was."

6. Downton was a rarity in Social Credit—a lawyer and a secular urban intellectual. A bright, cheerful figure, he headed the Young Socreds at the University of Alberta. He died relatively young from the complications of kidney disease.
7. As a semi-moribund organization, the Young Socreds were prone to takeover by some odd people. A year earlier their presidency had been won by a young man who wore a serape and campaigned to the theme of "The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly." He subsequently got into trouble with the law and was quietly dumped.
8. Two days earlier Manning left office for the last time. There was no massive shredding of files, no midnight runs to the government incinerator. When he walked out, he took only a briefcase, and he never came back.
9. The tension was especially felt at the ministry of Education, the government's largest ministry, where the mandarinate was well educated, highly professional, and headed by one of the toughest, brightest deputy ministers in the government, T.C. (Tim) Byrne. Byrne and the writer waged an intermittent struggle for influence over Education minister Bob Clark for three full years.
10. To put this in historical perspective, it was only a few years since Tom Watson of IBM had stated that there might, eventually, be a need for four or five large computers in the world.
11. A party task force eventually tabled 53 recommendations for change. Four were implemented: a citizen's environmental review agency, increased efforts to market Alberta produce abroad, assistance to food processors, and redistribution of seats to address the urban-rural imbalance. Other ideas—automatic nonvoting seats in the Legislature for the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton, to allow them to speak on behalf of urban concerns; an automobile license tax to generate extra revenue for the cities; limited tenure for deputy ministers; and broader rights of appeal for citizens from civil service decisions—died a quiet death. Some of the proposals were dusted off and included in the party's 1971 election platform. But by then they took on the appearance of a deathbed conversion to reform.
12. One of the groups that had the most to learn about drugs was Strom's own Cabinet. When the writer arranged a screening of the two films for Cabinet members, there was a stunned silence. Reacting to the fact that one of the films reported that drugs were freely available in most Alberta small towns and rural areas, an elderly Cabinet minister blurted, "If we say that, aren't we condoning drug use?" Only after lengthy debate did Cabinet approve the two films for use in the schools.
13. Credit for the RFP initiative should go to Preston Manning, who first began promoting the idea in Alberta in the late 1960s.
14. The Tories had no such compunctions. Peter Lougheed had studied Jack Kennedy's and Pierre Trudeau's mastery of television and had polished his television manner to a high gloss. The Tories bought a huge amount of television time during the election (85% of their budget) and used it well, demonstrating one of the ways they were the contemporary, urban party of the future.
15. Significantly, in Ontario the administration of Premier Bill Davis was re-elected, demonstrating that it is possible for the successor of a powerful leader (John Robarts) to succeed.
16. The Liberal popular vote had dropped from 19.7% in the 1963 election to 10.8% in 1967 and was to drop to 1% in 1971.
17. The closest it came was a promise of a $1,000 one-time-only cash grant to young married couples to buy their first house.

The Progressive Conservative Premiers 1971-

Peter Lougheed 1971-1985

ALLAN TUPPER

Peter Lougheed, 1971–1985

Introduction

Writing in 1966, Edwin R. Black and Alan C. Cairns observed the little-studied development of cohesive provincial societies in Canada. To describe this process, they coined the helpful phrase, "province building." "Since 1867," they commented, "Canadians have been engaged in more than the construction of a new state; they have been building provinces and complex series of relationships between governments and societies as well."[1] Black and Cairns noted the emergence of ambitious provincial elites in such spheres as government, resource industries, and public administration. These elites did not want either the federal government or market forces to shape their provinces' destiny. Black and Cairns also noted provincial economic strategies and the important roles of provincial governments in health, education, municipal government, and resource development. The impressive powers of provincial governments were used to forge provincial identities, to bind citizens to their provinces, and to generate provincial loyalties that complemented and sometimes conflicted with national attachments.

This chapter views Peter Lougheed, Alberta's tenth Premier and its first Progressive Conservative Premier, as Alberta's most determined, innovative, and successful province builder. Under Lougheed's leadership, the chronically weak provincial Progressive Conservatives won four consecutive provincial elections, three with decisive mandates, and Alberta emerged as a major economic and political force in Canada, despite its relatively small population. The Lougheed years, 1971 to 1985, saw substantial growth in Alberta's population, unprecedented provincial prosperity, and major changes in provincial government policy, institutions, and practices.

Lougheed built the Alberta Progressive Conservatives into an electoral dynasty. Less tangibly, he developed a new sense among Albertans about their distinctive role in Canada and about the nature of the provincial political community.

How does one fairly evaluate a decisive and controversial political leader? Should Lougheed be assessed against the objectives he set for himself and his governments? What weight should be given to the views of critics? Should the biographer generate independent criteria for judgement? Does the biographer apply today's standards of judgement to leaders in years past? Can the biographer speak easily to times that he himself has witnessed and participated in?

These questions are important when evaluating Peter Lougheed's record as Alberta Premier. They are made particularly complex by certain characteristics of the Lougheed years. First, oil and gas policy, economic diversification, constitutional change, and federal-provincial relations—Lougheed's preoccupations—are technically complex and politically charged policy issues. Lougheed's governments undertook innovations in these areas that are difficult to condense and make easily intelligible. Second, Lougheed's governments were active and ambitious. They did a lot of things over 14 years. Third, Canadian provincial politics have not received much sustained attention from social scientists—the government of Canada remains the focus. Alberta is certainly no exception to this observation. Very little has been written about the Lougheed years. Remarkably, a definitive biography of Lougheed waits to be written, the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta is not the subject of a single major book, and many important areas of public policy are unexplored.

A common perception of Lougheed, which this chapter will seek to dispel, is that he was simply the lucky beneficiary of enormous oil and gas price increases, a politician who reaped the rewards of vast, externally generated resource wealth. According to this view, his record is unexceptional—Alberta's province building was done in the easiest of circumstances. This interpretation ignores Lougheed's commitment in office to ideas that he had developed long before winning elected office, downplays his skill in institutionalizing a new political order, and wrongly minimizes his influence on Canadian federalism.

To argue that Lougheed had a decisive impact on Alberta does not imply that his record is beyond criticism or that his impact is uniformly seen as benign. Alberta is not a perfect society. Lougheed had his critics. Their opinions are noted throughout this chapter.

Rise to Power

Born in Calgary on July 26, 1928, Edgar Peter Lougheed was part of a distinguished Alberta family. His grandfather, Sir James Lougheed, was a leading force in Alberta business and legal circles. A law partner of R.B. Bennett and an influential federal Conservative, Sir James was a Senator and a Cabinet minister who undertook important national work. Like his grandson 50 years later, Sir James had grand visions for Alberta and the Canadian West. In his view, western Canada would become the economic centre of the Dominion through a combination of its resource strength and entrepreneurial spirit.

Sir James Lougheed died, a relatively wealthy man, in 1925. But the Depression reversed Lougheed fortunes in the 1930s. Peter's father, Edgar, maintained the family's businesses in difficult times. Financial hardship caused the Lougheeds to move frequently into rented homes and apartments in Calgary. The Lougheeds' hardship was, of course, relative—many Albertans suffered greater deprivation in the 1930s.

Peter Lougheed's upbringing and early life experiences were unexceptional. In an era when national let alone international travel was rare, Lougheed's world was bounded by Alberta. He attended public schools in Calgary and the University of Alberta where he studied law. Lougheed enjoyed team sports and excelled at football. His interests were wide-ranging. He was active in student government, although partisan politics were not his passion. Lougheed was a good but not outstanding student, a person of enthusiasm and great energy, and a young man with obvious leadership skills and a capacity to motivate and persuade others.

Lougheed was married in 1952 to Jeanne Rogers whom he met at the University of Alberta. The newlyweds left Alberta in 1952 when Lougheed entered the Master of Business Administration program at Harvard. He considered his time there as an enriching experience that broadened his horizons, gave him a feel for the United States in the 1950s, and strengthened his grasp of complex organizations. A summer job with Gulf Oil took him to Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the young Albertan saw the substantial decline of a once oil-rich city. In Tulsa's experience he saw a possible future for Calgary and Edmonton. What happens when the oil runs out and nothing has been put in its place?

Lougheed's early years give no obvious clues about the source of his ambitions or his strong desire to make his mark. Allan Hustak, in his review of Lougheed's early career, hints that Lougheed was driven to restore his family's status.[2] He suggests that Lougheed, as a boy, sensed the distress caused by the sale of family assets during the Depression. He felt the decline in material well-being and social status. Lougheed himself gives no hint of those influences. In an interview, he simply mentioned that Sir James undoubtedly inspired "an ethos of public service" and that his father, Edgar, had "no real choice" but to struggle with the family business.[3]

After graduating from Harvard, Lougheed returned to Alberta where he worked for the Mannix Corporation, a major construction firm with interests throughout Canada and abroad. Lougheed performed well with Mannix and rose to senior positions. He gained exposure to international financial and commercial dealings. He was involved in community activities in Calgary and ultimately left Mannix to establish a law practice.

Lougheed believes that people should pursue many interests in their careers and eschew narrow specialization. He envisioned for himself a "life of many paths" with stints in business, law, and government.[4] In the early 1960s, he began to think about a political career. At that time, Alberta was represented in Parliament primarily by Progressive Conservatives, who filled the opposition benches. To Lougheed, the life of a backbench MP in the federal Conservative Party held no luster. It was a "lousy job," especially given the ardours of travel to Ottawa.[5] Provincial politics had more potential for interesting work and major accomplishments. However, Social Credit had governed Alberta since 1935. It had been returned with substantial majorities, although in 1955 the provincial Liberals had showed well. Social Credit was led by the skilled Ernest C. Manning, then dean of Canada's Premiers and still Alberta's longest-serving Premier.

Lougheed described Manning as "a colossus," a man of stature and consequence in Alberta,[6] but he sensed a growing dissatisfaction with Social Credit's rural, small-town appeal, its staid image, and its passive resource-development policies. He felt that Manning was "psychologically outside" federal-provincial relations and that Alberta suffered diminished national stature as a result.[7] To Lougheed, Social Credit was out of touch with Alberta's "strength, history, and abilities."[8] Alberta should be a leader, not a "junior partner," in Canada.

Sensing chinks in Social Credit's armour and translating these into a viable political party proved to be different things. Lougheed's ambitions demanded a political vehicle, but few obvious choices arose. His inclination was to consider leadership of the provincial Conservative Party. In the 1960s the party was a minor force in Alberta, a status it had endured since the formative years of Alberta politics when it had unsuccessfully challenged the Liberals and formed the opposition. In the provincial general elections of 1959 and 1963, the Conservatives received approximately 24% and 13% of the vote respectively. In 1963 they fielded candidates in only 33 of 63 constituencies. After reflection, Lougheed decided to enter provincial politics—the likely site of important work in the future, in his estimation—and to pursue the Conservative leadership. He envisioned three stages in the pursuit of power: to win the Conservative leadership, to establish the Conservatives as a serious contender in the next provincial general election, and to gain a majority government.

Of the three tasks, winning the Conservative leadership was the easiest. For most provincial Conservatives, Lougheed, a dynamic young Calgary lawyer, was a promising candidate. With minimal organization, he won the Conservative leadership in 1965. The next steps were more demanding. As Lougheed put it, the Conservatives had "no seats, no money, no organization, and no presence in the minds of voters."[3] His strategy was to make virtue of necessity and to use the blank slate to advantage. To his mind, the Conservatives had no debts, either financial or political, and no recent history that had to be erased. His challenge was to build the Conservatives into a viable alternative to the Social Credit dynasty.

Lougheed's ambition and energy were formidable, but Premier Manning was respected throughout Alberta. He was shrewd, and the province was relatively prosperous. The oil industry expressed some concern with Manning's approach to resource development, but was generally content with his passive policies.

Hard realities became apparent to Lougheed. An instructive event was a by-election in Pincher Creek-Crowsnest in 1966. Social Credit had held the seat, but other parties, especially the New Democratic Party (NDP), had ambitions. As the Conservative leader, Lougheed played a direct role in campaign strategy and hoped for a strong showing. His hopes were dashed. The by-election was a two-way struggle between Social Credit and the NDP. The Conservatives finished a distant third, slightly ahead of the fourth-place Liberals. Lougheed and his fledgling team were "in awe" of the organizational capacity of the NDP, which brought in seasoned political organizers from across the prairies. Luckily, Lougheed had decided not to contest the riding personally. To use modern terminology, the Pincher Creek by-election revealed the steepness of the Conservatives' "learning curve."

Lougheed persevered during a difficult period. He was convinced that Social Credit was vulnerable and that a suitably organized and positioned Conservative Party could oust them. Lougheed's electoral strategy revolved around candidate recruitment. He believed the Conservatives had to recruit strong candidates who excelled in many walks of life and who had profile in their communities. Partisan political experience was not a particular asset in Lougheed's view. He sought candidates who were successful "outside of politics." Moreover, the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party was to be distinct from the federal party. Efforts were made to develop strong constituency organizations. The Conservatives considered television, a medium eschewed by Social Credit, as a valuable asset. Finally, Lougheed avoided personal criticism of Manning and overt attacks on Social Credit's record. The Conservatives presented themselves as a competent vehicle of change.

Lougheed achieved his second goal—representation in the Legislative Assembly—when the Conservatives won six seats in the 1967 provincial general election. During the campaign, prominent church leaders in Edmonton had organized a leaders' debate. Such debates were not established parts of campaigns as they are now, and Manning, as the decided front-runner, saw no advantage in exposing himself to his opponents. On the

PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF ALBERTA (J 172)

Peter Lougheed, Leader of the Opposition, in the Alberta Legislative Chambers, February 9, 1968.

other hand, as a devout Christian, he was hard pressed to decline a request from church leaders. The debate proceeded. Lougheed seized the occasion and shone. He sensed that his strong performance in the debate gave him new prominence, particularly among the media. The six elected Conservative members included Lougheed, Len Werry and Dave Russell from Calgary, and Don Getty and Lou Hyndman from Edmonton. The sixth Conservative was Hugh Horner, a physician from rural Alberta with strong Conservative credentials and federal political experience. Horner gave the party credibility among rural voters that Lougheed lacked.

As Opposition leader, Lougheed expanded his caucus by recruiting independent members and winning by-elections. In the Legislature, he proceeded as a responsible alternative that combined criticism with new ideas. Manning's view, steeped in prairie non-partisanship, that the Legislature was above "politics" was understood by Lougheed, who proceeded respectfully. Beyond the Legislature, Lougheed recruited candidates, built his network, and advanced a message of positive change.

In 1968 Manning retired after more than three decades in public life. He was replaced by Harry Strom, who was a much easier opponent for Lougheed. Strom was an earnest man of integrity, but lacked dynamism and Manning's experience and shrewdness. He was not up to the task of quickly updating Social Credit in the face of the Conservative challenge and substantial changes in Alberta society. As David G. Wood noted, "Strom was a thorough-going gentleman: kindly, courteous, and a good listener. But he was not dynamic, and he did not exude vigour and enthusiasm."[10] The contrast between the aging Social

Creditors led by Strom and the young Conservatives led by Lougheed was stark. Conservative fortunes were buoyed when Bill Yurko won Manning's former Edmonton seat in a by-election.

Strom called a provincial general election for August 30, 1971. The Conservative campaign rested on strong candidate recruitment, strategic use of television, and the presentation of a positive platform that stressed the need for change. The Conservatives' campaign slogan was simple—"Now!" The outcome of the 1971 election was certainly not foreordained. The Conservatives were seen as a legitimate alternative. But Social Credit waged a vigorous campaign. Ultimately the Conservatives prevailed in a tight election. Lougheed won a majority government with 49 seats compared to 25 for Social Credit and one for the NDP. The third phase of Lougheed's strategy had been accomplished. Power had been won. It now had to be consolidated.

The common interpretation of the 1971 election is that the Progressive Conservatives captured a changing public mood in Alberta. The province had become urbanized, secular, and up-tempo. Social Credit was out of touch with the times. Lougheed captured public impatience for change and reflected Albertans' new self-confidence. At the same time, Lougheed, with deep roots in Alberta and strong connections throughout Alberta society, was a safe alternative. He would modernize Alberta, but within the boundaries of political orthodoxy. Writing in 1980, Lewis G. Thomas put Lougheed's victory in the larger context of Alberta's political history:

> Lougheed had all the attributes of the traditional elite as had a number of the other young men who associated themselves with him. He had an education and business background that appealed to those in the business community who found the muted development policies of the old regime unduly constricting. ... Lougheed also had a style that appealed to Alberta voters, whom prosperity had made more conscious of such matters. He and his followers made a notable contrast to the dowdy and old-fashioned image which Social Credit presented in a North American society whose attitudes were so largely formed by television advertising. ... His victory seemed to bring Alberta into the new era.[11]

A variation of this view sees Lougheed as the vanguard of an urban "middle class" that wanted a more up-tempo provincial government and saw its material interests allied with the well-being of Alberta's resource industries.

A strong dissent is provided by Edward Bell, who asserts that Lougheed's victory was not inevitable, that Social Credit had substantial support in 1971, and that broad-brush interpretations like social change, new classes, and a desire for modernity are not convincing.[12] In Bell's view, the 1971 election is better explained by "bread and butter" matters like poor relations between Social Credit and government employee unions, Strom's weak campaign, and, perhaps most importantly, his failure to recruit younger candidates and to modernize Social Credit's appeal. Social Credit had reinvented itself several times over its long history in response to growing opposition. According to Bell, it certainly had the potential even in the late 1960s to undercut the fledgling Conservatives.

Table 1:
Party Standings (Seats/Percentage of Vote)—Alberta General Elections

	1971	1975	1979	1982
Liberal	0/(1.1)	0/(4.9)	0/(6.1)	0/(1.8)
NDP	1/(11.4)	1/(12.9)	1/(15.7)	2/(18.8)
PC	49/(46.4)	69/(62.6)	74/(57.4)	75/(62.3)
Socred	25/(41)	4/(18.2)	4/(19.8)	0/(0.8)
Other	0/(.1)	1/(1.1)	0/(0.7)	2/(3.8)

Source: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the General Election of the Twenty-Third Legislative Assembly, *Province of Alberta*, 1993.

Under Lougheed's leadership, the Alberta Progressive Conservatives won three further general elections (1975, 1979, and 1982) with substantial legislative majorities and considerable public support. For most of Lougheed's 14 years as Premier, Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister, and between 1972 and 1984, except for the brief interlude of Joe Clark's Conservative government, the Liberals governed without House of Commons seats from Alberta. Lougheed parlayed federal Liberal indifference and Alberta's resource wealth into a Progressive Conservative dynasty, shown in Table 1.

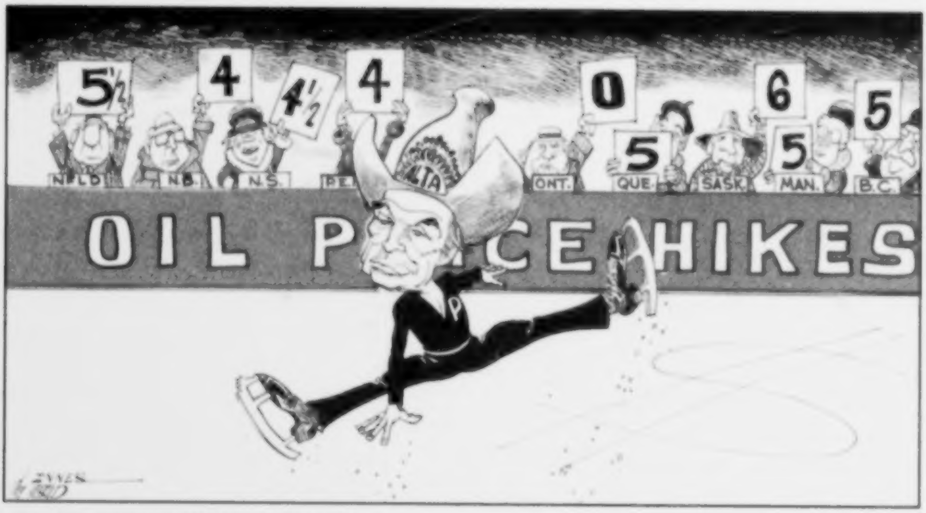
In 1971, however, the future was unclear. The OPEC revolution had not yet occurred, and Alberta's new government faced a financial deficit. Few foresaw the tumultuous years ahead. Fewer still predicted that Alberta's provincial government would soon be at the heart of Canada's national controversies for the foreseeable future or that Alberta would experience unprecedented economic prosperity.

The New Alberta: Oil, Natural Gas, and the Constitution

The Lougheed years were dominated by national debates about the pricing, control, and export of Alberta's oil and natural gas. Ultimately, the politics of oil and gas became intertwined with the other major national undertaking of the period: the effort to renew the Canadian constitution. In that arena, Alberta pursued a policy of "defensive" province building that tried to protect Alberta's resources and limit the federal government's capacity to shape provincial priorities. Controversies around these questions influenced Albertans' perceptions of the national community and their sense of Alberta's place in Canada.

Lougheed's staunch defense of Alberta's interests and his views of federalism were hallmarks of his tenure as Premier. His province-building strategy rested on the foundation of provincial ownership of natural resources, a power he envisioned as expansive in scope and implication. Lougheed used resource ownership to alter the balance between the resource industry and the provincial government, and he advocated his views with tenacity, consistency, and passion.

Debates about resource pricing, export, and, above all, revenue sharing were extraordinarily controversial in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s. Oil and gas politics are prone to controversy given Alberta's considerable reserves and production capacity. Though the province has only 10% of Canada's population, the Alberta government wields substantial



GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (M 8000-481)

Increases in the price of oil were a boon to the Alberta economy, but were less popular in other parts of Canada. In this political cartoon by Tom Innes, Canada's other nine Premiers give Peter Lougheed low marks for his performance. (Published in the Calgary Herald, *October 25, 1979.)*

powers over resources that all Canadians depend upon. Oil and gas royalties provide significant revenues to the provincial government, and resource industries are central to Alberta's well-being. The province undoubtedly has considerable authority over these resources. On the other hand, the government of Canada represents all Canadians, including the majority of Canadians who reside in the industrial heartland of Ontario and Quebec, and has substantial authority over offshore development, interprovincial trade, and exports. In the 1970s and 1980s, these tensions were exacerbated by rapid price increases wrought by international changes and by Canada's position as a country that produced oil and gas and also imported substantial amounts of oil.

Lougheed demanded maximum provincial benefit from Alberta's declining reserves of conventional oil and gas. His province-centred view of federalism rested uneasily with Pierre Trudeau's passionate views about Canada's need for a strong federal government that spoke for all Canadians. The federal Liberals' chronic weakness in Alberta allowed Lougheed to advance a seldom-challenged view of Alberta's interests.

Alberta and Ottawa were embroiled in intense disputes during Lougheed's tenure. Hyperbole was sometimes used, witness Donald Macdonald's comment, as federal minister of Energy, that Don Getty, then an Alberta Cabinet minister and a future Premier, was "dripping with venom."[11] On the other hand, Alberta and Ottawa ultimately agreed on oil and gas policy throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. Both sides compromised after tough negotiations. Alberta's share of revenues grew substantially, the provincial economy prospered until the early 1980s, and the oil and gas industries were generally content.

Governments also cooperated to ensure that the multi-billion dollar Syncrude plant at Fort McMurray was built. The huge project that converted Alberta's vast tar sands deposits into crude oil almost collapsed when a private-sector partner pulled out of the consortium in 1975. Lougheed worked with the remaining corporate partners and with the federal and Ontario governments to rescue the Syncrude project with equity and tax concessions.

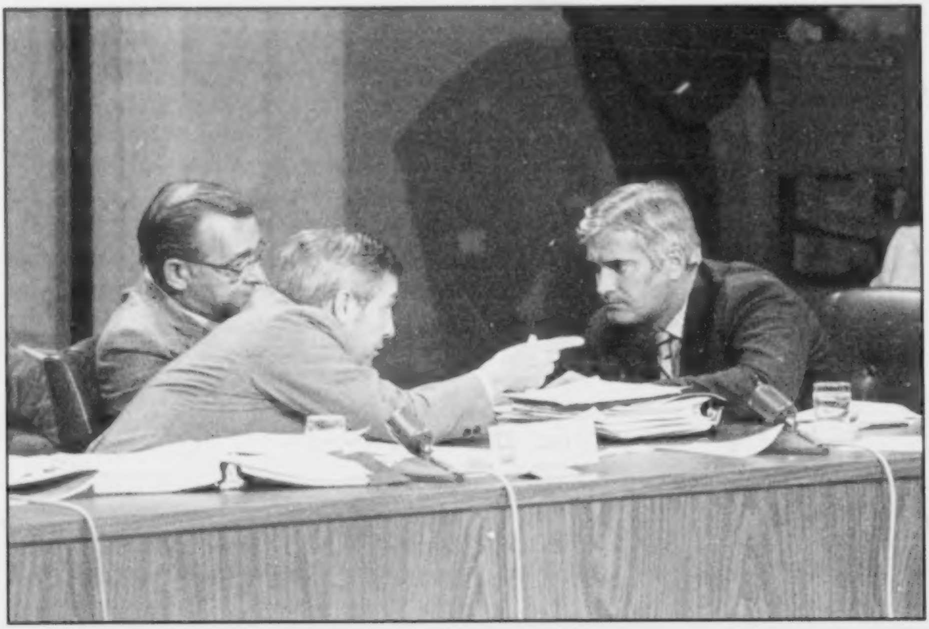
OPEC's impact on Alberta is often commented upon in relation to the Lougheed years. John Richards and Larry Pratt, perceptive observers of Alberta in the 1970s, highlighted the shifting power between oil-producing and oil-consuming regions of the world in the 1960s: "Oil was becoming a seller's market *extraordinaire*. Those who controlled the supply of this vital resource would henceforth be in a powerful bargaining position to dictate the terms of its future availability to energy consumers."[11] Richards and Pratt noted that the international dynamic had an internal Canadian equivalent in the struggles between Alberta, the energy industry, and the government of Canada.

Major changes in North American energy markets were not widely recognized in the 1960s. In North America new reserves began to fall below demand, giving rise to growing dependence on oil from the Middle East, a politically unstable part of the world. North American dependence became clear in 1973 when OPEC producers quadrupled the export price of crude oil, embargoed oil exports to several European countries, and allowed some countries, notably Saudi Arabia, to sharply curtail production. Rising prices and concerns about secure supply wracked the industrial world for the subsequent decade. But Lougheed had made clear his intentions to increase Alberta's share of resource wealth and to shift power westward well in advance of the first major OPEC shock.

Lougheed's province-building ambitions were already visible in 1972 and 1973. His early priority was to arrange a major meeting between the government of Canada and the governments of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba to address western Canada's economic potential and policy needs. The meeting, called the Western Economic Opportunities Conference (WEOC), was held in Calgary in October 1973. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau made encouraging comments about Ottawa's need to better understand western aspirations. However, the Premiers heavily criticized federal policy. Orchestrated by Lougheed and needing little encouragement, they portrayed federal transportation and economic development policies as at best indifferent to western Canadian needs. Federal policy perpetuated a division of labour between an industrial heartland and resource-producing peripheries.

The WEOC had lasting consequences. Among the western provincial governments, it established a tradition of cooperation that survives as the Western Premiers Conference. It also demonstrated the national impact of a united western Canada. WEOC certainly advanced Lougheed's national profile. His ideas and administrative approach were evident throughout. Lougheed trademarks, visible throughout WEOC, included a disciplined, orchestrated approach to events, the use of well-prepared policy documents, and emphasis on issues where common western cause was possible. He served notice that Alberta had clear views about economic strategy and resource policy and that the provincial government would advance Alberta's case.

Lougheed launched a major province-building initiative in 1972 when he announced important changes in Alberta's petroleum and natural gas royalty structure. His aim was



GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA 2864-23512)

Peter Lougheed confronting John Turner at the Western Economic Opportunities Conference, Calgary, Alberta. Sitting at Lougheed's left is Hugh Horner, Alberta minister of Agriculture. (Published in the Calgary Herald, *July 25, 1973. Photograph by John D. Colville.)*

to increase Alberta's share of revenues and to assert the provincial Crown's position as owner. In order to prosper in the long term, the province had to maximize its returns from its declining, non-renewable resource base. Lougheed's particular concern was Social Credit's maximum royalty rate of 16.66%, which had been given statutory sanction. He declared that the Social Credit government had "made a very serious error in judgement" in setting the rate so low.[15]

Two aspects of Lougheed's increased royalty policy merit attention. First, it was launched more than a year prior to Canadians' rude awakening to the new power politics of oil. Second, Lougheed's ambition was to shift the balance of power between public and private sectors in Alberta. The federal government, the third major player in the struggle, was not yet fully engaged.

Lougheed's preference was to allow existing oil and natural gas leases to remain untouched until expiration. New leases would be subject to much higher royalty rates. But federal policy led Lougheed to claim *force majeure* and to insist that *all* leases be subject to much higher provincial royalties, a position that angered the oil industry. In late 1973 Ottawa announced an export tax on oil, a policy that Lougheed called "the most discriminatory action by a federal government against a particular province in the entire history of Confederation."[16] In condemning the export tax, Lougheed stressed the province's rights as resource owner. He used the now well-known argument that the oil export tax

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA 2864-23511)

Peter Lougheed's relationship with Prime Minister Pierre E. Trudeau was problematic, as the two repeatedly clashed over issues of federal-provincial jurisdiction. Here, in a lighter moment, Lougheed presents Trudeau with a branding iron. (Published in the Calgary Herald, *July 25, 1973. Photograph by John D. Colville.)*

was directed against Alberta. Why was there no tax on BC lumber, Saskatchewan potash, or pulp and paper from Quebec and Ontario?

The oil export tax controversy set the tone for the next decade. Lougheed used it as a pretext to cancel *all* oil and gas leases and to impose maximum royalties provisions. He gained the oil industry's ire by insisting on a much larger share of revenues for Alberta. Over time, Lougheed made concessions and alterations in the face of industry complaint. But as Larry Pratt notes, Lougheed's aggressive stance caused the oil industry to be wary of the new Premier.[11] Lougheed also made it clear to Ottawa that he was a formidable negotiator, a determined defender of Alberta's interests, and a person capable of decisive national action. The province builder had arrived.

Another federal action evoked a severe reaction from Lougheed. In 1974 the government of Canada decided that it would no longer permit petroleum companies to deduct provincial royalties from the calculation of taxable income. Pierre Trudeau, then in a minority government position, justified the decision as a necessary defence of Ottawa's fiscal regime. Lougheed's view was that the federal move profoundly interfered with the province's resource ownership rights. He contended that Ottawa's action undercut the energy pricing agreement that had been put in place earlier in the year.

The oil export tax and royalty deductibility issues signaled a stormy decade for Canada. For the duration of the 1970s, Lougheed and Trudeau engaged in tense intergovernmental negotiations over oil and gas pricing and revenue sharing. A major change occurred in 1979 when the Progressive Conservatives, with strong Alberta representation, formed a minority government led by Joe Clark, himself an Albertan. While in opposition, the Conservatives had argued that Canada could become self-sufficient in oil and natural gas, but the policy of the short-lived Conservative government shifted from achieving Canadian self-sufficiency to reducing demand and consumption by substantially increased prices. Higher prices were music to Alberta's ears because Canadian prices had been held below international prices in the 1970s. However, large price increases would wreak havoc on the national economy and cause hardship for Canadian consumers. At the same time, the federal government wanted an increased share of oil and gas revenues so that it could undertake its national responsibilities.

These issues evoked tensions between Alberta and Ottawa that were on par with, and possibly greater than, those experienced when the Trudeau governments were in power. Clark became caught between Lougheed and Ontario Premier William Davis, who publicly opposed large price increases. In reviewing this episode, Jeffrey Simpson concluded:

> Clark learned a lesson that a more experienced Prime Minister would have understood. In federal-provincial relations, Premiers are colour-blind when the vital interests of their provinces are at stake; in fact it is often easier politically for them to have a federal government of a different political stripe to blame at provincial election time.[15]

In other words, conflict between Ottawa and Alberta was about much more than lack of Liberal representation from Alberta in Parliament or tensions between Trudeau and Lougheed, two strong-willed men. Lougheed's desire to enhance Alberta's national stature and to maximize its resource wealth lay at the heart of the matter. No Prime Minister, not even a Conservative like Joe Clark who held a benign view of provincial governments, could easily concede Alberta's position.

The 1980 to 1984 period was a profoundly important one in federal-Alberta relations. After the federal Liberals won a majority government in 1980, Prime Minister Trudeau worried that Quebec nationalism and western provincialism, centred in Alberta, were threatening the national interest. He was determined to weaken both forces and reassert federal authority. His government undertook two major initiatives in light of this analysis: the National Energy Program (NEP) and constitutional reform.

The NEP was Ottawa's response to the world's changing political economy of oil, to Alberta's assertiveness, and to Canadian nationalism. It was a new approach that challenged many assumptions. Despite its title, the NEP stressed oil and natural gas. Those resources were said to be of such importance that they required a new policy framework.

The NEP was both an optimistic and a pessimistic document. On the bright side, it argued that Canada had abundant resources and was better placed than many other countries to respond to new realities. On the other hand, the NEP asserted that energy issues had become too divisive. It advocated a new regime aimed to assure security of energy supply, to enhance Canadian ownership and control over resource development, and to achieve greater fairness in revenue sharing. Rejecting the view that Canadian oil and natural gas should quickly rise to prevailing world prices, the NEP did nonetheless see the need for substantial, incremental increases in prices and admitted that Canadian oil and gas was undervalued. It advocated a complex, "made-in-Canada" pricing policy.

The NEP was frank about revenue-sharing. It argued that changing world oil politics had benefited Alberta to the substantial detriment of other Canadians and the government of Canada. In response, the NEP asserted a "national patrimony"; a term implying that all Canadians should share the burdens and benefits of price increases. Ottawa argued that it needed greater resource revenues from oil and gas to undertake its national obligations. The NEP stressed that Alberta would fare very well under its proposed revenue-sharing and pricing agreements, while insisting that the federal government deserved a larger slice of the pie:

> The revenue share accruing to each level of government is a function of a mixture of fiscal instruments that has evolved over time. The result is a distribution of benefits that is extraordinarily unfavourable to the national government, even in comparison to such countries as Australia, where the state governments, like the Canadian provinces, own the resources. Revenue-sharing arrangements in Canada are an international anomaly, bearing no relationship to the rights and responsibilities of the two levels of government.[19]

Other NEP provisions that distressed Alberta included substantial exploration incentives for Canadian firms that were more generous when these firms operated on Canada Lands, those territories—the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, for example—that were under direct federal control. Alberta saw this NEP provision as an effort to shift oil and gas activity away from Alberta. Alberta's power and unique character would be reduced if other areas of the country became major oil and natural gas producers.

Lougheed responded furiously to the NEP, employing, as he normally did, several tactics. He took legal action, mobilized other Premiers, prepared fall-back positions, and, most importantly, rallied Albertans to his cause. In a provincewide television address, Lougheed posed a stark choice:

> You will determine whether or not you want to see more and more of your lives directed and controlled in Ottawa or whether you want to see a fair portion of the decision-making determined by Albertans in Alberta. If you choose the latter, I believe, over time, we will have a stronger Canada and a better Canada.[20]

Lougheed also proposed a dramatic Alberta response. To force federal concessions, he declared that Alberta would make three 60,000 barrel reductions to its production of crude oil. The first cut would take place on April 1, 1981, with the other two at two-month intervals thereafter. Ultimately, the federal and Alberta governments renewed negotiations, and some of the more controversial elements of the NEP were modified. A new energy accord, achieved in 1981, ended with a celebratory toast between Lougheed and Trudeau, a picture of which was widely reproduced in major Canadian newspapers.

The NEP remains a potent symbol of western discontent. Lougheed's supporters, probably most Albertans, saw his position as reasonable under the circumstances. They believed the province had already recognized the "national patrimony" by consenting to below-market prices for its diminishing oil and natural gas reserves. Alberta had given enough.

Hostility toward the federal government accounts for the election of a western separatist candidate in a 1982 provincial by-election in rural Alberta. But Lougheed's strategy was certainly not uniformly endorsed. He was criticized for polarizing public opinion and for posing an unnecessary choice between provincial and national citizenship. Moreover, Alberta's hard line on revenue-sharing was said to have precipitated a federal backlash. Alberta's position rested on the dubious premise that provincial resource ownership made provincial resources immune from federal laws and national claims. In a provocative essay entitled "Whose Oil is It?" Larry Pratt blamed both levels of government:

> Alberta's extreme defensiveness and its unwillingness to negotiate over such matters as the impact of rising world prices on the fiscal position of the national government have literally invited federal involvement. Thus, both levels of government have contributed to the post-NEP climate of polarized views, escalating commitments to fixed positions, and intolerance for dissenting opinion. The NEP was undoubtedly responsible for much of the temporary enthusiasm for western separatism over the winter of 1980–81, but so too were the excessive expectations created in the West by the provincial governments themselves.[21]

Lougheed's policies and tactics remain controversial. Their evaluation is ultimately shaped by the observer's views about the essential features of federal and democratic government. There is no doubt, however, that Lougheed put Alberta's interests at the centre stage of Canadian national life for more than a decade. His view of a province-centred federalism, his efforts to use provincial powers to shift political and economic power westward, and his advocacy of Alberta interests had lasting impacts. Alberta, a quiet backwater in the 1950s and 1960s, emerged as a major force in national life in the 1970s on par with Ontario and Quebec. Alberta was no longer a "junior partner" in Canada.

Lougheed's crowded agenda became even fuller in the early 1980s when Trudeau announced his intention to reform the Canadian constitution. The constitutional settlement that ultimately emerged in 1982 bears a distinct Alberta imprint. It is one of Lougheed's most important and controversial accomplishments. By pursuing a narrow agenda to protect provincial powers, his constitutional position is a significant example of "defensive" province-building. Lougheed was determined to limit Ottawa's capacity to shape provincial priorities.

Constitutional reform is an omnipresent theme in Canadian politics. Its roots lie in the character of Canada's constitutional experience. The original core of the written constitution was the British North America Act, a British statute. As Canada matured as a democratic society, it assumed the normal trappings and authority of a nation state. But the BNA Act was a British law that lacked an amending formula. As Canada developed, new ideas entered the national consciousness. Growing concern with human and individual rights led some to argue that Canada required an entrenched bill of rights. Many Canadians came to see the constitution as outmoded, devoid of inspirational content, and resting on an unworkable federal division of powers. The constitution also had defenders who praised its flexibility and responsiveness to social and economic change.

Prior to Lougheed, Alberta was a sporadically engaged participant in constitutional debates. Alberta entered Confederation in 1905 without the full slate of powers accorded to the original provinces. It lacked full control over its resources and did not receive such control until 1930. In the latter 1930s the Social Credit government passed legislation that exceeded the province's constitutional competence and challenged the Canadian power structure. But no coherent constitutional vision is discernible.

Constitutional reform in Canada more often failed than succeeded. Prime Ministers proceeded over the years with grand and modest agendas. In 1971 a new constitution almost resulted when governments agreed on a package of reforms commonly called the Victoria Charter. Quebec ultimately changed its mind, however. Harry Strom was Premier at the time, and Lougheed rejected the Victoria agreement. He objected to its proposed amending formula that gave British Columbia greater prominence than Alberta. Continuing federal interest in constitutional reform kept Lougheed's guard up, and the province struck a coherent constitutional position that rested on the idea of "equality of provinces."[12] Alberta rejected proposals that seemed to confer disproportionate power on a single province. Other Alberta ideas were that strong provinces and a strong federal government could co-exist. Lougheed spent considerable time on the matter of an amending formula.

In 1976 many Canadians were shocked when the Parti Québécois (PQ), generally referred to as "separatist," won a majority government in Quebec under the leadership of René Lévesque. Then in 1980 the PQ announced its intention to hold a referendum on Quebec's future relationship with Canada. Its vision was a loose Canada-Quebec partnership. In a vigorous campaign against this option, Trudeau made a "solemn commitment" to renew the constitution if the PQ's option was rejected. It was defeated, and Canada therefore embarked on another round of constitutional reform.

The events that followed are complex. In a nutshell, Trudeau launched a major constitutional review. Ottawa's agenda included an amending formula, patriation, a charter of rights, and proposals to strengthen federal economic powers. The provincial governments wanted many things such as greater provincial authority over resources, including offshore resources, and reforms to the Senate and Supreme Court of Canada. These matters were discussed without agreement at a First Ministers Conference in September 1981. Trudeau's next step was dramatic. He began an unprecedented process of constitutional amendment by the government of Canada alone. Two provinces, Ontario and New Brunswick, supported the federal initiative. The remainder became the "Gang of Eight."

Lougheed rejected unilateral federal action and the substance of the federal proposals. He understood Trudeau's resolve and saw threats to Alberta's province-building strategy. Lougheed became the principal architect of the Gang of Eight's dissent. He constructed a multi-pronged response. The legality of unilateral federal action was tested in the Supreme Courts of Manitoba, Quebec, and Newfoundland. Political action was taken in Canada and in the United Kingdom where Canadian opponents of Trudeau's plan urged British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to refuse Trudeau's request for unilateral constitutional change. In Canada Trudeau appealed directly to Canadians and tried to reach over the Premiers' heads, believing that most Canadians supported a charter of rights and patriation. Public opinion would side with Ottawa.

Trudeau's zeal was somewhat diminished when the Supreme Court of Canada declared Ottawa's action "legal," while ruling that major constitutional amendments required a "substantial degree" of provincial consent. This decision forced the governments back to the bargaining table. Ultimately, a constitutional agreement was reached, although Quebec refused to sign, declaring that other provinces had betrayed it.

The 1982 constitutional revision had several significant elements[11]:

- Patriation was achieved. The BNA Act became the Constitution Act, 1982.
- A complex amending formula was agreed to. In general, the constitution could be amended by agreement of seven provinces with 50% of the population and the government of Canada. However, if such an amendment takes away from the legislative powers or rights of a province, a dissenting province may declare that the amendment does not apply to it. Under limited circumstances an "opting out" province will receive federal compensation. Unanimous consent is required for changes dealing with the Monarchy, Supreme Court, and representation in Parliament.
- A Charter of Rights and Freedoms was included. The Charter had a "notwithstanding clause" that allows provincial legislation to stand even if it violates fundamental freedoms, legal rights, and equality rights.
- Section 92A strengthens provincial powers over natural resources by recognizing provinces' exclusive power over exploration, development, and other matters.

The 1982 constitutional settlement had many detractors. Critics worried about Quebec's exclusion, the alleged emasculation of the Charter by the "notwithstanding clause," and the lack of public participation leading to the revised constitution. Supporters also worried about Quebec's exclusion, but praised patriation, the Charter, and the achievement of an amending formula.

Lougheed's role is hard to evaluate and is dependent on the criteria for evaluation. If the test is the achievement of the Alberta government's goals, Lougheed's contributions are substantial and enduring. The amending formula is essentially the one developed and advocated by Alberta. Its existence is testimony to Lougheed's vigilance, his planning, and his success in building substantial Alberta expertise in constitutional and intergovernmental matters. The amending formula, particularly its opting-out provision, protects a resource-rich province from a predatory national majority. On the other hand, its premise is highly provincialist and ultimately denies a national will. Moreover, section 92A, the sole section dealing explicitly with the division of constitutional powers, is in Alberta's interests.

Lougheed's taste for strong executive government is manifest in his support for the "notwithstanding clause" in the Charter. With that clause in place, the provincial

Legislature could ultimately prevail over a Supreme Court decision. From these vantage points, Lougheed's achievements are remarkable. Alberta's capacity to resist hostile national majorities was enhanced as was its control over natural resources. The Charter was tamed if not defanged.

By other criteria, Alberta's constitutional contribution can be judged lacking. Roger Gibbins, a respected observer, saw Alberta and other western governments as narrow and defensive in their positions. Gibbins notes that perhaps little else could have been expected given the tag team of the NEP and federal efforts at unilateral constitutional reform. The debate was conducted in a heated and hostile atmosphere that allowed Alberta to stress protection of its resources. However, Gibbins implies a failure in Edmonton to consider reform to national institutions and popular participation in constitution making. In 1983 he reflected: "Lacking an alternative constitutional vision, western provincial governments fell into a largely defensive posture, protecting an institutional status quo that should not have been defended, not in its present form and not by the West."[34] Given his substantial popularity in Alberta, his strong political base, and his proven negotiating skills, Lougheed might have transcended the narrow agenda he had embraced.

The Role of Government

Peter Lougheed saw the powers and institutions of the provincial government as integral to his objectives. While committed to private enterprise as an ideal, he envisioned an active role for the provincial government. Textbook ideals about a narrow and restricted role for the provincial government made little sense in a province that was far away from major markets and population concentrations, that depended on natural resources, and that presided over valuable, but depleting, stocks of oil and natural gas. Lougheed saw an active provincial government as imperative if he was to strengthen Alberta's position in Canada, shift economic power westward, build a lasting economic infrastructure, and create strong citizen attachments to Alberta and its government.

Lougheed raised concerns about Alberta's dependence on natural resources to the centre of the province's political life. He brought urgency and focus to the need for coherent policies of economic diversification. Alberta had to be prepared for the time when oil and gas ran out. To Lougheed it was common sense that Alberta obtain maximum value for its depleting resources. That desire underpinned the disputes with the oil industry and the government of Canada. But much more was required in a landlocked province with a small population. New industries had to be developed, and new markets had to be exploited. Alberta had to reduce its dependence on external power, including central Canadian capital, market forces, and the Canadian government.

In the 1970s Alberta's economy, propelled by demand for oil and gas, was booming, which complicated Lougheed's position. The province reaped benefit from higher prices and had the wherewithal to promote economic change. But prosperity also invited short-term thinking. Lougheed was determined to manage the boom with an eye on the realities of Alberta's economy and the longer term. The oil boom provided the means to diversify the economy. The imperative was to keep the issue in the public eye.

Under Lougheed's leadership, the provincial government stressed upgrading Alberta's oil and natural gas before they left the province. Jobs must remain in Alberta and not be shipped down the pipeline to Ontario or elsewhere. This belief led Lougheed to envision petrochemicals as a major element of Alberta's economic future. In his mind, a strong petrochemical industry could flourish in Alberta. The industry was based on the extraction of products from oil and natural gas. Proximity to feedstocks was a natural advantage for Alberta.

Alberta's petrochemicals industry expanded significantly in the 1970s, but not without controversy. Skeptics worried about the industry's viability given Alberta's distance from markets. A major dispute occurred when two consortia, with strong Alberta representation, sought provincial approval for a major petrochemical expansion. Alberta's petrochemicals future was further clouded by a third proposal from Petrosar in Ontario. Lougheed brokered an agreement with the two Alberta consortia and threatened to deny Petrosar the oil that was its lifeblood.[25]

Lougheed also built new provincial institutions and strengthened existing ones. He relied on firms that combined government and private capital. A cornerstone in his strategy was the Alberta Energy Company, a unique enterprise funded half by the province with the remaining equity coming from individual Albertans, who were able to purchase shares at attractive prices.[26] Alberta Energy became a major Alberta-based oil and gas company with close links to the government, a clear public policy mission, and a commitment to strengthening provincial control over the economy. It also provided employment opportunities for skilled Albertans who might otherwise have left the province.

Lougheed's province-building strategy is highlighted by his controversial purchase of Pacific Western Airlines (PWA). In the 1970s PWA was a major regional-based airline with routes in western Canada and the Canadian North. It provided important transportation links in support of Alberta's oil and gas economy. The Alberta government bought PWA for fear it might be sold to new owners whose primary interests were in British Columbia. Lougheed felt compelled to act given the province's land-locked status and its need for effective transportation. The acquisition caused an interesting debate with the federal government about whether a provincial government could own an airline engaged in interprovincial transportation. Public ownership of an airline also worried some Albertans whose free-enterprise convictions were challenged by Lougheed's actions.

While increasing the government's role in the economy, Lougheed modernized the provincial public service. He believed that the government of Alberta must have policy competence equal to that of the federal government. He paid particular attention to policy areas that were central to his mission—intergovernmental relations, energy policy, economic and fiscal policy, and economic development. Alberta built a modern public service that served Lougheed's cause well. The Department of Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs (FIGA), created in 1972, supported Alberta's dealings with Ottawa, provincial governments, and foreign governments.[27] It analyzed constitutional and policy proposals, monitored the activities of other governments, and ensured that other Alberta government departments understood the province's national strategy. The provincial civil service provided rewarding careers for well-educated Albertans and increased Alberta's national impact. Almost by definition, it advocated policies that strengthened the provincial government.

Created in 1976, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund is arguably Peter Lougheed's most important undertaking. It is the public policy that best shows his vision of Alberta and its government. The Trust Fund was initially endowed with $1.5 billion of provincial revenues. Thereafter 30% of Alberta's annual non-renewable resource revenues were to accrue to the Trust Fund for investment.

The Trust Fund was a political response to Alberta's substantial wealth in the 1970s. At the time, unprecedented resource royalties swelled the provincial treasury. Taxes had already been cut and public expenditures increased. Further tax cuts might be inflationary and lead to unsustainable population growth in an already booming economy.[28] Moreover, left unchecked, Albertans would grow accustomed to high levels of public service and low taxes. Seen in this light, the Trust Fund was a safety valve of sorts. It would remove monies from current revenues, employ them for investment purposes, and substantially reduce the amounts thought to be available for new spending.

Such objectives were part of Lougheed's thinking. But the Trust Fund also embraced a longer-term vision. For one thing, it established the principle that a portion of Alberta's current resource wealth must be saved for future generations. Second, the Trust Fund would provide a substantial pool of capital that the government could use for economic diversification. The Trust Fund's Alberta Investment Division was charged with making investments that generated returns *and* contributed to diversification of the provincial economy. Third, the Trust Fund's investment income would become a major source of provincial revenue. In Lougheed's view, the resource boom would end. His task was to ensure that, as the boom faded and as Alberta's resource base declined, the economy would be more diversified and the provincial treasury, supplemented by Trust Fund revenues, would be able to provide high-quality public services without large tax increases. Fourth, the Trust Fund would finance projects that would advance the provincial interest and build a lasting infrastructure. Its legacy includes such major provincial institutions as the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Services Centre in Edmonton, the Alberta Children's Provincial General Hospital in Calgary, and the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Fund. Finally, Lougheed envisioned the Trust Fund's Canada Investment Division as a vehicle for "recycling" Alberta's energy wealth to other provincial governments through loans. Alberta could thus undercut the view that its resource wealth was destabilizing Canada's public finances.

The Trust Fund has had a lasting influence. Its "rainy day" objective has proven important. Trust Fund investment income provides the Alberta government with a flow of revenue that allows public services to be maintained at low levels of taxation. Other Trust Fund investments have yielded substantial benefits. A particularly valuable undertaking was the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research (AHFMR). AHFMR was established with $300 million of Trust Fund monies. Its purpose was to establish Alberta as an international site for advanced medical research. It has helped Edmonton and Calgary to become major medical research centres. AHMFR was an early version of an economic strategy that is now commonplace—the need for countries to attract "knowledge workers" and "brain power" industries.

Lougheed's plans for economic diversification raised questions even for Progressive Conservative supporters. Did a province have the constitutional authority to mount such plans? Did petrochemicals really constitute diversification, or did that industry simply

Table 2:
Province of Alberta—Non-renewable Resource Revenues and Personal and Corporate Taxes as % of Total Revenues (selected years)

	Non-renewable Resource Revenue (as % of total revenues)	Personal and Corporate Taxes (as % of total revenues)
1973	35.1	24.9
1975	40.5	22.4
1977	47.9	22.3
1979	51.0	22.0
1981	49.2	27.4
1983	45.7	19.5
1985	37.9	25.1

Source: Government of Alberta, *Provincial Budgets* (various years).

deepen Alberta's resource dependence? Could Alberta develop viable secondary industries? Ideology and partisan politics entered the fray. Alberta's New Democratic Party, led by the tireless Grant Notley, maintained that Lougheed was a spokesperson for business elites. His elaborate plans subsidized large corporations at taxpayers' expense. Notley's view was that proper stewardship of Alberta's resources required public ownership. Ultimately, his policies seemed very close to Lougheed's, and voters were hard-pressed to distinguish the two strategies.[21] Lougheed's plans also worried conservative Albertans. Why was a Progressive Conservative Premier so interventionist? Debates flared from time to time about, for example, Alberta Energy Company's close links with the provincial government. Critics saw it as deriving "unfair competitive advantage" from political connections.

Lougheed's ideas about economic diversification are enduring in their impact. His singular contribution was to highlight Alberta's dependence on declining oil and gas reserves and to urge Albertans to build a new economy. Those concerns remain central to Alberta political debate in 2004. Lougheed's ideas were important, but so too were his actions. He built Alberta's modern economic infrastructure, revitalized the provincial civil service, and established the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, which remains a pillar of the Alberta government. His plans for petrochemicals, medical science, and agricultural processing provided new opportunities for Albertans, attracted newcomers, and changed Alberta's economic structure. Lougheed's ambitions had an impact beyond Canada. His interests in petrochemicals urged him to expand contacts and markets in the United States. Asia beckoned as a future source of demand for Alberta products and as a source of investment.

In the 1970s Alberta amassed substantial budgetary surpluses that allowed for high-quality public services at low rates of taxation. Moreover, as Table 2 shows, Alberta received a remarkable proportion of its total revenues from resource royalties, not personal or corporate taxes.

Budgeting in Alberta was complex in the Lougheed years and unlike that prevailing in other provinces. Alberta's revenues were shaped by intergovernmental negotiations over energy prices and revenue-sharing and intergovernmental negotiations about shared-cost programs, especially in health programs that engaged all the provinces and Ottawa.

Alberta's revenue and expenditures were also shaped by heavy involvement in financing of energy "mega-projects" and infrastructure.[30]

Lougheed's approach to the budget was typical of his endeavours. He was deeply involved in the details and always well briefed. His budgeting faced several challenges. The first challenge, substantial surpluses, was one happily confronted. Lougheed's concern was to balance demands for spending on public services and infrastructure with long-term realities. Could Alberta sustain its present levels of spending? A second challenge was to persuade a generally conservative caucus that excellent public services were required if Alberta was to achieve its social and economic potential. In this vein, Lougheed was concerned about the electoral prospects of the NDP in urban Alberta. Lougheed's view was that the Conservatives' agenda had to reflect a clear commitment to excellent health, education, and social services. Third, Lougheed was determined to increase the provincial government's presence throughout Alberta. In classic province-building style, he constructed provincial buildings throughout Alberta, expanded provincial government offices outside of Edmonton and Calgary, and upgraded agricultural and transportation infrastructure. In these undertakings, Hugh Horner, the main link between the urban and rural Progressive Conservatives, guided Lougheed. Finally, even a person as energetic as Lougheed was constrained by the clock and by other obligations. He felt that his national undertakings in energy negotiations, the constitutional struggle, and mega-projects left too little time to make an equivalent imprint in social services, health, and education.

Democracy and Government in the Lougheed Years

Peter Lougheed established the Progressive Conservatives as a dominant force in Alberta provincial politics. In so doing, he undertook innovations in party and democratic practice. At the same time, he practiced a style of government, based on strong executive leadership and appeals to non-partisanship, that is the hallmark of Alberta's political culture.

Lougheed moved Alberta politics into the television age. He was the first major political leader to learn the medium, to grasp its political potential, and to build electoral and governmental strategy around it. Lougheed also introduced televised coverage of the debates of the Alberta Legislature, complete with camera angles that gave prominence to government members! Another important contribution was to recruit candidates that reflected Alberta's increasingly diverse racial and ethnic composition. Thus, a government with a large legislative majority, backed by a large, broadly representative caucus, could claim to represent all elements of Alberta society. Were opposition parties really needed?

Lougheed reinforced Alberta's long-standing commitment to non-partisanship. As an ideal, Alberta non-partisanship reflects the province's populist heritage. Prairie politicians often argued that the prairie provinces had common interests that were best served by strong governments that spoke for common regional interests. Competitive party politics were at best unnecessary. As Leslie A. Pal comments in his analysis of Alberta's Premiers, "Political leaders and their parties were expected to 'rise above and reach beyond' petty squabbles, to represent the essential interests of the province for its internal needs and external relations."[31]

Lougheed always appealed to non-partisanship. He stressed the need to recruit

GLENBOW ARCHIVES, CALGARY (NA 5516-72C)

Premier Peter Lougheed, speaking in Calgary, c. 1980.

Conservative candidates who excelled in other walks of Life and who had no intention of becoming "professional politicians." Lougheed seldom acknowledged the positions of rival political parties, preferring instead to offer his view of the public interest. During difficult times like the aftermath of the National Energy Program, he relied on provincewide telecasts to bring his message directly to voters. His extensive involvement in federal-provincial negotiations also gave him prominence and allowed him to speak for the general interests of Albertans. Those processes, and their resultant agreements, were dominated by heads of government and were generally undertaken without direct legislative input or public ratification. The cumulative impact of these forces was to blur the distinctions between the government of Alberta and the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta.

Lougheed governed with large majorities, especially after the 1975 general election. He understood that a large caucus required careful management and cultivation if power was to be maintained. Without such management, caucus might become unruly. Accordingly, Lougheed developed an active system of caucus committees. All members of caucus were involved in either standing caucus committees or special caucus committees. Caucus members were often formed into task forces to discuss emerging issues and to recommend action.

Full caucus met frequently and with high attendance. It reviewed government legislation and policy announcements before they were submitted to the Legislature. Members generally felt that caucus kept them involved, provided opportunities to shape policy, and maintained a focus on party priorities.[11] Lougheed employed caucus in another way. He developed the view that the Progressive Conservative caucus was the functional equivalent of a Legislature. The Conservatives had an overwhelming legislative majority, and caucus was large and broadly representative. Moreover, caucus examined major government initiatives in advance. The combination of such a caucus and a dominant Premier raised questions about the role of opposition parties and the role of the Legislature.

Lougheed provided his caucus with important roles, but on his terms. He dominated his party, his government, and Alberta politics. He believed that Alberta needed a strong, executive-led government if it was to influence national policy and diversify its economy. Critics often suggested that he ran Alberta like a business. A better representation is that he governed as a "strong-state Tory," a leader who, while committed to private enterprise, saw government as a major force in society. In this sense, Lougheed's view was straightforward: governments were elected to govern and to be held accountable. The principal mechanism of accountability was a general election. Between elections, governments needed autonomy and freedom from legislative constraints if the public interest was to be upheld.

Opposition parties frequently challenged this view of democratic government. They argued that Lougheed and the Progressive Conservatives were too secretive. Moreover, Conservative policies linked the provincial government with businesses in close alliances. Important public policy instruments such as the Alberta Energy Company operated like private corporations with little obligation to give account. Trust Fund decisions, thought to be fundamental to Alberta's future, were made by the Cabinet with only minimal, after-the-fact legislative scrutiny. Lougheed's opposition to freedom of information legislation was criticized as out of touch with public concerns about open government. Finally, critics maintained that Lougheed's governments were not responsive to the need for conflict-of-interest legislation. They argued that the provincial government was too close to business, that the public and private sectors overlapped, and that public officials, in a booming economy, had many opportunities to enrich themselves.

The End of the Boom

Lougheed's final years as Premier were troubling ones. In 1982 Alberta was hard hit by falling resource prices and a severe recession. Boom turned to bust. Alberta, Canada's promised land in the 1970s, was no longer the destination of choice. Unemployment soared, as did bankruptcies, business failures, foreclosures, and social problems. The provincial opposition parties, notably the New Democrats and Liberals, capitalized on growing public anxiety.

Lougheed responded predictably. He established programs to shield Albertans and Alberta businesses from rapidly rising interest rates. He maintained provincial government expenditures. In his view, abrupt cutbacks would exacerbate the downturn. Lougheed was prepared to run budget deficits if necessary. He saw no point in reducing public expenditures as the economy weakened.

In 1985, after 14 years as Premier, Peter Lougheed announced his intention to resign. At time of writing, only Ernest Manning has served longer. Critics saw Lougheed's timing as an effort to avoid responsibility for Alberta's collapsing economy. This criticism is unfair for several reasons. First, Lougheed dealt directly with the economic downturn from 1982 until his resignation in late 1985. He confronted problems as he saw them. Second, Lougheed had often maintained that he would stay for two terms. Yet he governed for four terms. Finally, Lougheed mentioned the obvious strain of "six-and-a-half day weeks" during a political career that, in 1985, had stretched over more than two decades.[11]

After leaving office, Lougheed remained active in Alberta and Canadian public affairs. He and Donald S. Macdonald co-chaired the Canadian Alliance for Trade and Job Opportunities, the principal pro-free-trade body prior to the 1988 general election. Lougheed strongly advocated the view that Canada could have close economic ties with the United States without losing either decision-making autonomy or its distinctive national identity and national values. He actively promoted Canadian interests abroad, became interested in education, and served on corporate boards. He served as Chancellor of Queen's University, lectured at the University of Alberta, and returned to the practice of law in Calgary. His contributions have been recognized in many ways. In 1986 he was appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada. Lougheed has received many honorary degrees from Canadian universities, including Queen's, St. Francis Xavier, Dalhousie, and the universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Many observers believed that Lougheed disagreed with Premier Klein's policy of reducing the size and influence of the provincial government.

It is commonplace to say that influential leaders both reflect and shape their times. Certainly this adage applies to Peter Lougheed. To many who have met him, he personifies Alberta's best qualities. He is forward looking, decisive, optimistic, and boundlessly energetic. Not even harsh critics ever doubted his intense devotion to Alberta's well being.

Lougheed's influence is pervasive and lasting. More than any other Alberta Premier, before or after, he put Alberta on the national stage. His clear, often controversial, positions on energy policy and constitutional matters caused the federal government to take seriously western Canadian interests. Lougheed established a lasting image of Alberta as the heart of the new West, a province with unlimited potential and one whose national weight exceeded that of the other three western provinces. His single-minded focus on economic diversification and modern economic infrastructure contributed to the well-being of future generations and built bonds between Albertans and their provincial government. Without exaggeration, Peter Lougheed can be seen as the principal architect of modern Alberta.

Notes

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Don Getty 1985-1992

MARK LISAC

Don Getty, 1985–1992

Introduction

A decade after he left office, Don Getty ruefully remembered with some pride the things he had both done and left undone so that his successor could get off to a popular start.

One of the big things he had done was to help farmers. His government's programs aided the survival of an agricultural economy sideswiped by difficult times. This assistance solidified rural support for the Progressive Conservative Party, which Getty believed laid the groundwork for the 1993 election. But there were other matters. "I kept a file of popular things to do in my top left drawer," he said, "things that I wouldn't do… There were financial things to do, reducing the Cabinet. I said, 'Well, I can do it,' and everyone would say, 'Way to go.' But why not let whoever wins the leadership do it? That's something positive. Everyone will nod, 'Yes.'"[1]

His delay blended into a larger effort to remake the Progressive Conservative Party into something very different from what it had been a few months before. There was a hidden edge to this reversal, one that cut deep. The Progressive Conservatives hung on in 1993 in a close election that opened the way to a broad revival and another generation of Conservative governments. They won by choosing the astonishing strategy of running against themselves. The new Premier, Ralph Klein, in effect ran against the old one, Don Getty. The new leader had to look as good as possible at the cost of the old one's battered reputation.

Getty moved on afterward to a happy life as a grandparent and member of corporate boards. For many in political circles, he did more than move on. His name and his image disappeared. It was not until October 1999, in a video retrospective of the party's history, that they showed up again at a Conservative convention. Even that concession seemed awkward. The boisterous crowd quieted down while photos of Getty appeared onscreen. The pictures faded, and he went back to being deliberately forgotten.

His disappearance was encouraged by a new government for whom it was convenient. It was allowed by the amnesiac tendencies of a largely apolitical province. Yet there was much to remember.

Donald Ross Getty was Premier of Alberta from November 1, 1985, to December 14, 1992. His seven years in power were a time of turbulent transition.

He had to hold together a government during a collapse of energy revenues that coincided almost to the week with his time in office. The loss of billions of dollars a year crippled provincial finances and sapped confidence in what had been Canada's most boisterously growing province.

Agriculture, still the economic underpinning of a third of the province's society, was ravaged by unfavourable weather and by price-depressing international trade conflicts.

Economic foundations were shifting. The late 1980s saw the transformations generally known as "globalization." There were huge new pressures on prices and wages in any industry tied to international trade, as most of the industries in Alberta were. Theories of how to manage private and public organizations also underwent drastic revision.

More than a decade of struggles with inflation and unemployment culminated in the Bank of Canada's final determined campaign to crush inflation with onerous interest rates, despite a heavy cost in jobs and short-term investment.

The Progressive Conservative Party was itself changing by 1985. The party had reduced the opposition to four seats of 79 in the Legislature by the early 1980s. Then it had alienated the capital city of Edmonton by refusing to represent Edmonton's interests in a dispute between the city-owned telephone company and provincially owned Alberta Government Telephones.

The broader political landscape was shifting, too. The federal Progressive Conservative Party was splintering under the pressures of regionalism. It eventually came apart, breaking into a Conservative remnant and the new Reform Party. The split was most intensely felt in Alberta and reverberated in provincial politics. It was accompanied by new interest in the tax cuts and privatization that the British government of Margaret Thatcher and American government of Ronald Reagan were imprinting onto the political grammar of the day.

At the same time, the fundamental nature of the country seemed to be at stake in two attempts to rewrite the Canadian Constitution—the Meech Lake Accord of 1987 and the Charlottetown Accord of 1992. Both failed. Their wreckage brought down much of the country's surviving trust in politicians and in the traditional political process.

Any of these strains would have been difficult to cope with. Don Getty's governments had to cope with all of them happening at once.

It was a period of discontinuities. Yet much of what happened during Getty's time as Premier grew out of the past. And much of what followed in the 1990s grew out of innovations or experiments begun during his time. It was not only Don Getty's name that disappeared from the province's memory in the 1990s. It was a realization that history is made of long lines of development, even in a province as prone to economic lurches and political storms as Alberta.

Early Years

Getty had already lived a life of transition in many ways. He was born on August 30, 1933, in Westmount, Quebec, in the middle of a family of three boys and two girls. His father Ross had been a medical student at McGill University. The Depression forced Ross Getty out of school. He moved through service in the air force, public relief, pickup labour jobs, and industrial pipe sales. He moved his family through Verdun in Quebec, and Ottawa, Toronto, and London in Ontario. Getty never really knew his grandparents. An uncle once tried to trace the family's Irish roots, hoping to find a connection with fabled American billionaire John Paul Getty, but did not succeed.

The family went through the tough times familiar to many Canadians during the Depression and Second World War years. Getty had childhood memories of stuffing cardboard into shoes to make them last longer, and of seeing his father jump onto a truck with a shovel some mornings to go out to a second job and earn money for food.

By the mid-1940s, the family of seven was living in a three-room apartment in what was known as the GECO development in Agincourt, Ontario, just north of what were then the city limits of Toronto. The building was an old General Engineering Co. warehouse cut up into units to cope with an emergency housing shortage. It was "a very tough place to live," Getty would recall in his unpublished autobiography. "The walls separating the units were paper thin. There was barbed wire, gravel, and garbage, with residents of the tenements being looked upon as outcasts."

The main pastimes for children in the development were hockey and basketball played in a makeshift gym equipped with a bushel basket with its bottom cut out. Getty started playing football by throwing pieces of newspaper tied up with string in the cinder-paved yard of GECO. His father loved playing family hockey and football when he could. His mother Beatrice had been a national lawn bowling champion. His sisters called him Porky as he poured eggnog into his tall, skinny frame in an effort to beef up for the school football team. His heroes were the stars of the Montreal Canadiens and a football great named Royal Copeland.

Sports was a passion. Its values of toughness, perseverance, loyalty, and teamwork became personal guideposts. If anything counted more than sports it was his family. "We didn't sit around the dinner table talking politics," Getty recalled in the autobiography. "A lot of sports. A lot of family things. We were very tight-knit and did everything together… We supported whoever did anything… We all participated. I loved my family."

Their fortunes turned up, as did those of many other Canadians, during the post-war boom. They moved to London, Ontario, where Getty became a multi-sport athlete, student council president, and high-school football star. He grew into more football success at London's University of Western Ontario, playing quarterback under legendary coach John Metras. A week after a championship sports career and graduation with a degree in business administration, he married Margaret Mitchell, his girlfriend since high school. They shared much in common. The daughter of a retired Ontario farmer who was a national old-time fiddle champion, she was an accomplished athlete, a star in school musicals, a cheerleader, and a Sunday school teacher. Immediately after the wedding, in the summer of 1955, they left for Alberta. The Edmonton Eskimos football club had seemed more interested in the young Canadian quarterback than the East's tight-fisted Hamilton Tiger-Cats. Al Anderson, the Eskimos' general manager, had even promised, "We'll pay your honeymoon costs."

They drove out with borrowed money in a used blue Buick, early participants in a long wave of migrants drawn west as much by the adventure as by opportunity. Like many others, they found both. Getty landed on one of Canadian football's storied teams at the peak of its glory days. He made his name when he found himself thrust into the 1956 playoffs and Grey Cup game as quarterback.[2]

Coming in as a 22-year-old rookie quarterback among rugged veterans cemented the sense of leadership he would carry with him the rest of his life. Nearly 50 years later he stated:

> A lot of it isn't throwing the ball, isn't calling the play, although that's important. It's leadership. And your team and you are thrown into tough

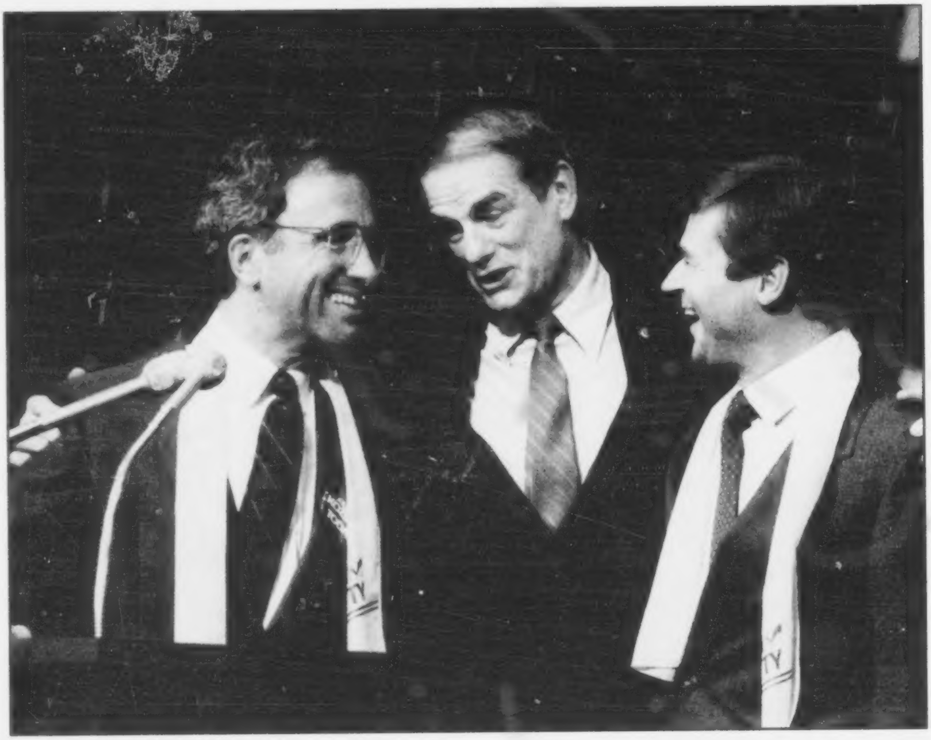
> games. And the guys you're playing with are 10 years older than you. Because they're playing football they're kind of mean, tough—linemen and fullbacks who would just as soon bash somebody as listen to them. The real art for a quarterback, assuming you can throw and think, is that you've got to lead them and make them believe in you.[3]

Off the field, the young couple started raising four sons, and Getty started a career in the province's thriving oilpatch, setting up his own company, but also working for Imperial Oil Ltd. It was a typical Edmonton success story of the time. In the mid-1960s, with Getty's football career over, newly chosen Progressive Conservative leader Peter Lougheed asked him to run for what was then an insignificant opposition party. They entered the Legislature in 1967. In 1971 the Conservatives won a shocking victory, using fresh ideas and a base in the cities to turn out an aging Social Credit establishment that had been in power for 36 years. Getty won his Edmonton seat a second time despite being hit by pneumonia a few days into the campaign. The loss of time to illness had not been all bad as far as he was concerned: "I didn't like standing on street corners, waving at drivers anyhow, preferring a low-key approach."[4]

Getty became Lougheed's minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in 1971 and Energy minister in 1975. Among the innovations for which Getty took credit was the creation of provincially owned Alberta Energy Co., which grew into a long-term financial and political success before its privatization two decades later. The 1970s saw the new government take Alberta through rapid economic growth and a corresponding rise in self-assertion. Lougheed's team had taken on Social Credit partly out of conviction that the old government was chronically too timid with Ottawa. Their new aggressiveness tended to shock and annoy federal politicians. Getty's Cabinet posts often put him at the abrasive contact point with federal ministers. He came out of the experience with his stock high inside Alberta and his reputation reasonably strong across the country, despite one memorable outburst in which then federal Energy minister Donald Macdonald described him as "dripping with venom." (They later became friendly.) His eight years in Cabinet left Getty with a strong impression that Alberta was treated as very much a junior partner in Confederation. The experience rankled his sense of pride and fairness and helped convince him to look toward Senate reform as a possible remedy.

Getty wrote Lougheed in August 1978 to say that he did not plan to run in 1979. However, he held in the back of his mind the possibility of getting back into politics one day. There was only one job for which it would make sense to come back. The next few years brought a business career as head of an investment firm and appointments to the boards of Royal Bank and several other firms.

When Lougheed decided in 1985 to step down, Getty was widely regarded as the natural successor. He was experienced and popular. He won a second-ballot convention victory in October after a tough and occasionally controversial campaign against Cabinet minister Julian Koziak and Ron Ghitter, a Calgary property firm executive who had been a prominent member of the Legislature in the 1970s. Ghitter's campaign was managed by Cabinet minister Marvin Moore, who would go on to become one of Getty's most prominent critics inside the party. The win masked an early sign that the political world was



COURTESY THE EDMONTON JOURNAL

Getty joking with rival candidates Ron Ghitter (left) and Julian Koziak (right), immediately after winning the Progressive Conservative Party leadership on October 13, 1985. The show of unity on the convention stage never developed into unstinted party support for Getty. By 1989 there were calls for a leadership review, and Ghitter was telling prominent figures in the party that Getty should be replaced. Getty was a shy man whose natural reserve sometimes undermined the political salesmanship the job of Premier required. But he also had a streak of broad humour in him. He once posed for a photograph sticking a finger into the mouth of a mounted fish and wincing as if it were biting him.

already changing around him. Ghitter had campaigned for party renewal. The idea that the Conservatives were in the grip of an aging establishment would gnaw at Getty and his government for years.

Getty's First Term as Premier

The new Premier formally arrived in his office November 1, 1985, and entered the Legislature with a by-election win several weeks later. He learned immediately that the job would be throwing tough new problems at him. He said after retirement that Lougheed had told him to expect a budget deficit of $2.5 billion in the coming year.

Bad as it was, that news did not adequately communicate how deeply the energy revenue collapse would cut into the new government's freedom to operate. In the end, lack of money would affect everything that Don Getty and his Cabinet ministers did over the next seven years.

But even in those early days, the outlook was worse than the government publicly acknowledged. Internal estimates not made public until their release to the provincial archives more than a decade later suggested that Alberta was heading into perhaps five years of depressed oil and gas prices. The Treasury Department's confidential transition briefings—based on information that had gone before key Cabinet ministers during budget preparations in September—warned Getty he could be looking at deficits of at least $1 billion and rising for an entire term of government.

A Treasury document dated October 3, 1985, noted that some private-sector forecasters "have talked about the possibility of a major decline in the price of oil followed by modest growth to 1990." It said that even a moderate price drop could cost $1 billion in revenue losses in the 1986–87 fiscal year, rising to $1.5 billion a year by 1989–90 because of a cumulative effect on income-tax revenue.

Government spending was still high compared with most other provinces. It had grown at an average of 3.3% a year for the preceding three years. Under Getty, spending growth would be contained, and annual provincial government spending per person would go into a long decline. But other factors and the overhang from the 1979–82 cost explosion, when spending had grown at an annual average of 22.9% during the tail end of the great oil boom, would leave a widespread impression of spending out of control.

The confidential estimates of late 1985, gloomy as they were, turned out to be far too optimistic. Oil prices plummeted further and faster than anyone had expected in the winter and spring of 1986. The shock rattled a province used to prosperity. It sucked more air out of faltering capital investment, which had been at the centre of Alberta's growth but had become too big to sustain. Part of the Treasury Department's briefing included an overview of the provincial economy. It said that capital investment had accounted for 39% of total economic demand in the province by 1981 and concluded: "No economy that we know of has ever allocated such a high share of its output to investment over an extended period of time."[5]

The transition to more normal times—made rougher by a Canada-wide recession, high interest rates and an oil and gas industry shaken by the National Energy Program (NEP) and U.S. pipeline firms' cancellation of natural gas purchases—put many strains on everyday life. The construction workforce shrank to about 50,000 by the mid-1980s from about 100,000 five years earlier. Labour relations deteriorated. Many trades workers and others left the province, aggravating the weakness of real estate prices. Collapsing real estate values in turn eroded the foundation of many of the regional financial institutions, some of which the boom had lured into unsound lending policies. Two new Alberta-based banks fell during the Conservative leadership contest—the Canadian Commercial Bank closing on September 1, 1985, and the Northland Bank on September 30. The Alberta credit union system had teetered on the edge of collapse. About one-third of the province's 131 credit unions were in serious financial trouble. They were saved by an ingenious plan involving provincial support through the Credit Union Stabilization Corp., created in late 1984 and supported by more than $100 million in government funds by the time Getty became Premier. The farm economy was in trouble, too.

It was a full plate of problems. They were all the more perplexing because the NEP had been cleared away in an agreement with Brian Mulroney's new federal government early in 1985; the province had expected the end of the NEP would mean a return to greater prosperity. While the public imagination was absorbed by the near-daily fall of oil prices through the first months of 1986, Getty and his ministers were more worried by the general sapping of confidence and by the potentially devastating impact of further collapse among financial institutions.

"You get those things just coming one after another like they're going to fall," Getty would recall. "Someone's got to be optimistic, and someone's got to rally Albertans and say we can handle it. And that was the job: [to see that] the series of shocks didn't get through and devastate the credit unions, didn't wipe out 325,000 people… And, in one way we almost did it without scaring them enough. Because they didn't realize how much we were doing."[6]

The confused concern felt by many Albertans was summed up in a memo dated February 6, 1986, to Getty from Shirley Cripps, a member of the Legislature from the farm and oilfield service area around Drayton Valley, about an hour's drive southwest of Edmonton. She said she had been talking to people about planned oilfield activity and had heard deeply troubling comments: "I believe that you should know there is far more unease out there than even during the NEP energy crisis… If the price of oil stays down, instead of renewed vigor in the provincial economy, jobs may really be as scarce as hen's teeth this summer. I certainly do not envy you the job of trying to bring down a budget with most of the wild cards still in the deck. Good luck."[7] Seven days later, a headline in the *Edmonton Journal* read: "Oil Prices Fall 'Off the Cliff.'"

That April, the first budget under Getty featured plenty of reassurance about Alberta's basic strengths. There was a heavy investment in agriculture, which had been a centrepiece of Getty's leadership campaign: drought was met with a string of targeted spending programs; high interest rates with a $2 billion program of 20-year loans capped at 9%. And there was a $2.1 billion deficit.

Getty stood in the Legislature seconds after the speech and called his first election as Premier. He won a strong mandate—61 of 83 seats in the Legislature and 51.4% of the vote. However, Edmonton was still disaffected, and tens of thousands of former Conservative supporters stayed home, allowing the election of 16 New Democrats.

The price of oil bottomed in April at about $10 US a barrel. The province responded with $250 million worth of royalty cuts and incentives for the energy industry. Before the year was out, there was also an interest-free, $85 million loan for the Syncrude oilsands plant and a nine-month cut in royalties at the Suncor oilsands plant to 1% from 12%.

Much of Getty's and his government's energies in 1986 were absorbed by negotiations to build a heavy oil upgrader near Lloydminster in conjunction with the Saskatchewan government and Husky Oil, and to encourage the Syncrude oilsands plant to follow through on plans for a $750 million expansion. Both projects saw Alberta disappointed with federal reluctance to put in money. And both eventually saw a heavy financial commitment by the province—a $380 million loan guarantee for the Husky upgrader and a $200 million guarantee for the Syncrude expansion.

These decisions set a pattern. The Getty governments spent several years and hundreds of millions of dollars to support the capital investment that the Treasury Department had warned in 1985 was collapsing. Capital investment was the real engine of the Alberta economy.

The province depended on growth—industrial development, immigration, and endless provision of new infrastructure. Supporting this growth was a crucial policy, but a problematic political story. Leaders before and after Getty had simpler and more attractive messages. Lougheed had booming prosperity and a constant fight for provincial rights against the federal government. Klein was to be associated with balanced budgets and paying down debt. Getty never had an effective central story to tell; using public money to support agriculture and encourage investment came across as defensive, complicated, vulnerable to charges of favouritism, and prone to disaster when individual businesses failed.

Through 1986 the government witnessed a $3 billion collapse in energy revenues. The 1986–87 deficit ballooned to $3.4 billion on a total budget of $10.6 billion. It became clear that low energy prices might last for some time. Treasurer Dick Johnston said in his first budget speech in the spring of 1987: "Deficits in the order of $3 billion cannot be allowed to continue. If not checked, Alberta would find itself in a chronic deficit situation with more and more tax dollars diverted from services for Albertans to paying interest on debt today." The government adjusted with tough measures—a $1 billion increase in taxes and fees and a 6.3% cut in program spending. The cuts were led by 3% cuts in operating grants to schools, universities, hospitals, and municipalities. "This degree of expenditure reduction by a government is unparalleled in Canada," Johnston said. The government played for time and hoped for recovery in the energy industry.

It almost worked. Then a national recession sank the economy in the early 1990s, just at the time Getty and his senior ministers had expected to stabilize provincial finances. In the midst of that recession, they chose to avoid the solution the province later embraced, which was to go beyond spending controls to severe spending cuts. In 1993 voters were ready for drastic action. In 1987 the situation did not seem that urgent.

The public reacted to the budget with an ambivalent shock. The deficits were starting to become worrisome. But cuts to basic services were unwelcome in a province that still thought of itself as rich. The government reacted to the public response with shock of its own. For most of the last half of 1987, little happened. The government tried to weather the situation by counting on new economic growth. By 1988 the economy was swinging up, and hopes rose for several months.

Getty made a point of trying to keep up morale. He saw his job as leadership rather than management. He favoured striking action, when possible. The farm loans of 1986 were one example, part of a program billed as the "largest job stimulation effort in Alberta's history."

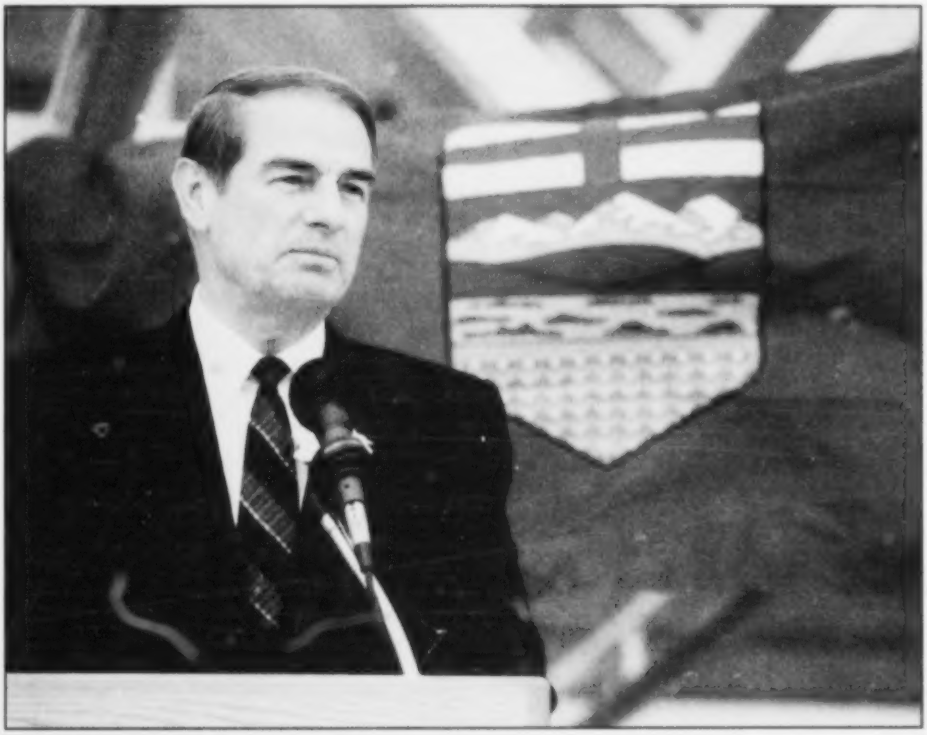
The approach came naturally to him from his past in sports and business. Political leadership was different, however. It required even more attending to psychological needs. Getty wanted to move away from Lougheed's intensely involved and managerial style. He preferred an overall directing role. And a flair for manipulating perceptions was one of the last things that drew his interest. He was too much a private person for that. Even in his university football days, he rarely had more than one beer with teammates after games.

Gordon Young, his executive assistant for some years, said the one thing most people did not know about the Premier was that he was very much a shy person. At best, media commentators and voters interpreted his reserved ways as similar to the persona of the old film actor Gary Cooper, who usually played principled characters of unassuming manner and few words. At worst, the disinclination to reach out was interpreted as aloof distancing from ordinary people by a man too comfortable with life in corporate boardrooms. The latter image clashed with the reality. He was a man who remembered having to borrow the down payment for his first house from Eskimos' teammate Normie Kwong. He liked simple pleasures such as old Jack Benny comedy shows and his wife's pumpkin chiffon pie. He wore cowboy boots and listened to earthy country singer Merle Haggard.[7] But the Premier's job was part showmanship. His disdain for that would soon permanently mar his public image.

While the government tackled its tough money problems, Getty began long engagements with other issues. His most urgent and deeply felt mission was reform of the Canadian Senate, which had been the subject of think-tank debate for a number of years. British Columbia Premier Bill Bennett had tried to push creation of a House of the Provinces (a remade Senate appointed by provincial governments). Lougheed liked that idea, but felt the political wind shifting toward more popular control. He decided on public hearings. A committee led by Calgary MLA Dennis Anderson worked for several months and reported in early 1985 that Alberta should press for what was becoming known as the Triple-E Senate (EEE for elected, equal, and effective). The idea had influential Conservative supporters such as Calgary oil and gas executive Jim Gray, who drafted five pages of advice on the Senate in December 1986, ending with: "*Do not* hesitate and *do not* stand on the sidelines… If we fail in this very important task at this crucial period in our history we will have only ourselves to blame for the consequences."[8]

By December 1986 Getty was well on the way toward making Senate reform the core of Alberta's constitutional negotiating position, and a personal crusade. At the annual Premiers' conference in Edmonton that summer, Quebec had presented its five conditions for constitutional reconciliation. Getty managed to add a sixth principle—that Senate reform should be pursued in any further constitutional discussion. He then made Senate reform his personal cause when he addressed a provincial Conservative convention for the first time as Premier, early in April 1987. At the First Ministers' meeting at Meech Lake, Quebec, a few weeks later, he successfully bargained the Senate into the constitutional package known as the Meech Lake Accord. The accord required the Prime Minister to appoint senators from lists presented by the provinces and to hold conferences on Senate reform once a year. Provincial ratification of the accord within the three-year time allowed would have put these provisions into effect. In fact, the reform began in practice at the end of 1987 when Prime Minister Brian Mulroney appointed Gerald Ottenbreit to the Senate from a list of five names recommended by the Newfoundland government.

It was only a partial step. Another clause in the accord required unanimous provincial consent for any eventual change to Senate powers or to methods of selecting senators. Yet it was a stunning achievement after years of inconsequential talk about Senate reform. When provincial ratification dragged out through 1988, Deputy Premier Jim Horsman



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Getty presides at the opening of the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton in 1988. It was to be one of the last major hospital openings for more than a decade; the government was already in the midst of one of the most stringent programs of spending restraint undertaken by any of the provinces in the 1980s. The Alberta flag in the background was a potent symbol of Getty's determination to protect the interests of the province. He moved to Alberta after growing up in Quebec and Ontario, but after serving two terms as a Cabinet minister under Premier Peter Lougheed in the 1970s, he became convinced that the federal government was treating Alberta as a junior partner in Confederation. His experience solidified his determination to try to bring about Senate reform.

toured the country to engage in talks with other provinces and in a public information campaign. Other provinces, outside Ontario and Quebec, which had the most influence to lose, began warming to the idea.

In 1989 Getty went further when his government passed the Senatorial Selection Act. It established an election process to be used whenever one of Alberta's six seats in the Senate came open. Mulroney and others in the federal government reacted coldly. A briefing for Getty in August 1989 before a meeting with Mulroney stated:

> The federal government is opposed to the Senatorial Selection Act and believes that the legislation could have far-reaching negative consequences for Canada's parliamentary system… Federal officials in meetings with Alberta officials have stated that the legislation is "constitutionally challengeable."[12]

Nevertheless, a provincewide election took place on October 16, 1989, and Mulroney grudgingly appointed the winner, former army general Stan Waters, to the Senate eight months later. The appointment caused a brief controversy because Mulroney claimed he had won an agreement in return that Alberta would not hold another Senate election for five years. But nothing like this had ever taken place in the country.

It was a significant personal achievement for Getty, all the more so because reports from inside the Premiers' meetings indicated that his combination of doggedness and decency carried the issue. The other Premiers listened because of his refusal to give up and because they heard a plain man explaining in simple language why Senate reform was important to Alberta. If nothing else, they knew Senate reform was a bargaining chip; here was something they could offer Alberta in exchange for Alberta's agreement to other provisions. Within days of Waters's appointment, however, the ratification period for the Meech Lake Accord expired, and Getty declared Senate reform dead.

The campaign for Senate reform blended into another broad stream of political change for which Getty had less sympathy. In September 1987 an Alberta-led movement founded the federal Reform Party at a convention in Winnipeg. The convention picked as Reform's first leader Preston Manning, son of former Social Credit Premier Ernest Manning.

The new party reflected a popular reaction against both the federal Conservatives and notions of an elite-dominated political system. Reform criticisms of Brian Mulroney's government in Ottawa reflected back onto Alberta. Mulroney was growing unpopular for a variety of reasons. Two of the biggest were his willingness to accommodate Quebec and his failure to balance the federal budget. Getty was inevitably implicated—despite occasional strong disagreements with Ottawa such as the province's fight against implementation of the federal Goods and Services Tax.

One other rift became nearly as pronounced as the fight against the GST. In 1988 Getty questioned the way bilingualism was practised, and his government brought in legislation making it clear that English was the only official language for Alberta's laws. Mulroney wrote him on June 6, 1988, with the language bill pending in the Legislature, to say: "In all frankness, I deeply believe that a positive and generous approach is required in this matter. I cannot stress too strongly the importance of minority language rights in this nation."[11] The bilingualism controversy also saw Getty criticized by some at home. Many other Albertans agreed with him on language, but his standing up to the pressures did him little long-term political good.

In 1991 the provincial Conservatives cut what had become embarrassing official ties to the federal party. The move signalled a transition from a monochromatic provincial party to one that was more of a coalition of some people who thought of themselves as Conservatives and others who thought of themselves as Reformers. Getty was never inclined toward that kind of ambivalence. He also had to keep working with Mulroney on everything from constitutional reform to aid for agriculture. The split between Reform and the Progressive Conservatives left him in a strained situation. Being Premier of Alberta became easier after the federal Conservatives were defeated by the Liberals.

Preston Manning had already been a vexing presence to the provincial Conservatives for years. In late 1983 and early 1984, he began trying to influence the provincial

Conservatives toward reducing the size of the government with an emphasis on "economizing from the top down." He tried to interest the government in a one-year experiment with "citizens' advisory councils." Ghitter warned Lougheed in a memo in December 1983 that he suspected "a naïve attempt to create a springboard for another political movement in the province." Rebuffed provincially and seeing an opening at the national level, Manning turned to federal politics.[12]

Rethinking along the lines he had urged had spread, however. Some Cabinet ministers had been pushing by the mid-1980s for more privatization of the extensive holdings that the government had built up during the Lougheed era.[13] The collapse of energy revenues had put a new edge on such thinking. One of the clearest expressions of the shifts taking place was set down in a letter to Getty in May 1986 from Ian Seph, a long-time communications director for Norcen Energy in Calgary and a former member of Lougheed's office staff. The days of high oil prices had been an aberration and were over, Seph wrote. "We must concede the left-of-centre vote to the Liberals and NDP and respond with conservative fiscal and social policies to attract the support of centre and right-of-centre Albertans." Getty wrote back, thanking him for "a thoughtful letter" and saying, "Clearly, Alberta is not able to endure a prolonged period of large deficit budgets." But he added that he wanted to be "prudent."[14]

This was a period of policy ferment and new worldwide economic realities. Those new realities played a role in a strike at the Gainers meat-packing plant in Edmonton, a labour dispute that became an open political sore. Gainers was owned by Peter Pocklington, a local entrepreneur whose talent for making money was matched by his talents for using other people's money to finance his investments and for tactlessly stirring up public antipathy. The labour market in the meat industry was international, he said. Edmonton workers had to be willing to match costs with workers in Taiwan. When his workers chose to walk out instead, he began busing hundreds of replacements. The situation at the plant gates deteriorated and took on the label, "The Battle of 66th Street."

Getty visited the picket line, but was disgusted by the attacks on buses carrying in non-union workers willing to break the strike. At the same time, he was trying to preserve social peace and an Alberta presence in a meat-packing industry going through the final wrenching phase of about 15 years of radical consolidation. The government finally helped broker a confidential deal, followed by the announcement of a $12 million loan and a $55 million loan guarantee for the aging plant. That led to further complications. The government seized Gainers in August 1989 for failure to make loan payments. The plant was losing $20 million a year and was eventually shut down. Acrimonious legal battles began with Pocklington.

Meanwhile, similar changes went on elsewhere. Another labour dispute at a beef packer near the southern Alberta town of Brooks ended with more wage rollbacks. Lower wages and scores of millions of dollars in government loan guarantees helped to create a modern meat-processing industry for the province. The jobs and the market for expanding beef and hog production came with a political as well as a financial cost—a growing perception of Getty's government as being in league with corporate owners. The anti-labour image grew worse when Alberta nurses went on strike in 1988. The strike was illegal under provincial law, but the nurses had strong public sympathy. The government seemed increasingly beset by political brushfires that never seemed to end.

The worst of them grew out of the collapse of the Principal Group. The brainchild of Edmonton businessman Donald Cormie, Principal had been founded in 1954 on the concept of "thrift." By the 1980s it was marketing itself as a one-stop financial centre, a kind of "department store" of finance. It offered investors relatively high rates of return. It also took advantage of its status as a closely held private company to keep most of its business practices secret.

Jim Darwish, a regulator in the Alberta Consumer and Corporate Affairs Department, warned his supervisors in 1984 that Principal was likely insolvent and was not cooperating with financial authorities. He demanded action. Instead, he was forced to retire by Connie Osterman, then the minister in charge. When Getty became Premier, Principal was on a Treasury Department "watch list"—a concern but only third in a list of financial institutions thought to be at some risk.[illegible] By mid-1986 dire warning signals had appeared. New investigations were ordered. Provincial treasurer Dick Johnston acted the following summer. Principal's two main investment subsidiaries were shut down by a surprise court order on June 30, 1987.

Principal Group itself filed for bankruptcy on August 10, and Johnston ordered its assets frozen the same day. Rumours of fraud circulated almost immediately. Angry investors berated the government for not moving sooner. A court-ordered inquiry led by inspector Bill Code opened the secretive world of Principal to public view in a painful public proceeding that lasted several months. Code's report in July 1989 concluded that Principal's investment firms had been in trouble as far back as 1980, when the economy was still booming. The investment firms were hurt by the real-estate collapse after 1982, but "would not have been profitable in any event." They were sacrificed to the interests of shadowy "upstairs" companies in the Principal empire and to the personal interests of majority owner Donald Cormie. There had been "fraudulent and dishonest" conduct. A significant contributing factor in their failure had been "the wilful refusal of the regulators to act effectively."[illegible]

Osterman was released from Cabinet within days of Code's report. Getty also announced an immediate settlement offer worth about $85 million to compensate investment contract holders. His government suffered a sharp blow to its waning reputation for business sense.

The most damaging blow was symbolic. The government had initially said it would not compensate more than 60,000 investors, but over time was dragged into expensive compensation and promises of an ever-widening inquiry. After the final shutdown on August 10, 1987, Getty left matters to Johnston and Corporate Affairs minister Elaine McCoy. His delegation was interpreted as lack of interest. When reporters tried to reach the Premier for comment, his press secretary told them the Premier was "working out of the office." A newspaper photographer went to an Edmonton golf course on August 12 and snapped pictures of Getty beside a golf cart, looking aloof behind sunglasses. The picture was published the next day. This one photo crystallized accusations that he was a part-time Premier and made Getty the personification of years of lax government oversight of the companies.

It was a hard hit that left an indelible public impression. The controversy angered Getty in part because he had been dealing with the Principal file by telephone from his home earlier in the day. He recoiled and became further estranged from the media at a time when some Conservatives were already starting to doubt his communication skills. The golf photo blotted out whatever good impression had been made by another photo a week earlier, taken when he had visited an Edmonton mobile home park devastated by a tornado. His relationship with the media for the rest of his time in office fell between grudging tolerance and low-intensity feud. The rawness of his feelings broke out in a congratulatory note to Mulroney on June 21, 1988, for a by-election win in Quebec: "You not only whipped the Liberal and NDP, but you beat the hell out of the media."[illegible]

His complaints had some justification. Political reporting in Alberta was not always functioning at a high level. The complaints also were born out of one of the many clashes of temperament and eras that marked Getty's time in office. "He's not a showman," a delegate to a PC party convention said in 1989. A showman was about the last thing Getty wanted to be, despite having spent much of his life in highly visible pursuits. Modern political leadership at times seemed to require following the public's expected choreography of media gestures. Getty often could not or would not bend.

Public impatience meant that he did not get much credit for one response that looked more significant over time. The Code inquiry provided one of the last opportunities that Albertans would ever have for a thorough examination of a failure in public management. Getty's accommodation of it and his request for an auditor general's report on the later NovAtel disaster stood in sharp contrast to later practice. Subsequent Alberta governments suffered less damage from suppressing information than Getty's government suffered from allowing public examinations of public business.

While Getty's image was taking knocks, the province's economic outlook was starting to improve. Oil prices began creeping up. The national economy seemed to be recovering. A federal election in 1988 sealed acceptance of a Canada-U.S. free-trade agreement that was bound to benefit Alberta's exports of resources. With confidence in the economy growing and with the stinging Code report still being written, Getty called an election for March 1989, a year earlier than would normally have been expected.

The campaign began well enough for the Progressive Conservatives, but stumbled when the party fell back on traditional election devices. Getty promised hundreds of millions of dollars in programs such as new interest-rate relief and the paving of every secondary highway in the province. There was some rationale behind these promises. Paving gravelled secondary highways would improve rural infrastructure and arguably reduce some long-term road maintenance costs. But the programs reflected deafness to increasing voter concern about government deficits.

At the same time, the resurgent Liberals were putting together a hardnosed campaign against Getty personally in his constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Their slashing tactics included a mocking debate at which an absent Getty, who had announced he would not attend, was represented by a large, stuffed cloth chicken.

The election saw the Conservatives take 44.3% of the vote and a solid 59 seats in the Legislature. The New Democrats remained a strong presence with 16 seats and 26.3% of

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Getty campaigns in Stettler in 1989, speaking to a group of bashful Hutterite women at the start of the by-election he won to remain in the Legislature after losing his Edmonton seat in the general election earlier that year. While he never felt comfortable in large groups or in situations where he had to flaunt his presence, people who met him at small gatherings or talked to him personally found him friendly and able to inspire confidence. Party members sometimes expressed the wish that he could project his personality at conventions the way he did in more private conversations.

the popular vote. The Liberals gained ground by winning eight seats and 28.7% of the vote under their new leader, Laurence Decore, a popular former mayor of Edmonton. Getty was beaten in Edmonton-Whitemud by former city councillor Percy Wickman.

The Premier did not respond bitterly in public. Some of his supporters did. While Getty was muted in his response, his route to a comeback spoke loudly. He ran in a by-election that June in the central Alberta constituency of Stettler after a Conservative member had resigned to make way for him. He announced his candidacy in the little community of Endiang, as far away from urban media centres as it was possible to get. He won with 71% of the vote and began looking for a home in the constituency while expressing his love of rural Alberta, a position that was no novelty for him. But by 1989 that countryside was a base of political unrest, increasingly more interested in the Reform Party than in the Progressive Conservatives.

Getty's Second Term as Premier

The second term began with damage—the loss in Whitemud and the Code report on Principal Group. Getty was a Premier who had just won a provincial election, but whose leadership was being questioned. He had scarcely had time to finish the Stettler by-election and was still putting together the public response to the Code report when serious cracks started appearing in support for him inside the party.

One event did not become public knowledge at the time, but foreshadowed what was to come. A handful of anonymous figures in the Progressive Conservative Party proposed to arrange a meeting with Getty on July 22, 1989, at the Banff Springs Hotel. A surviving preparatory note identifies the meeting spokesmen as "Jack Major/Harold Milavsky." Major, a former Lougheed law partner and future justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, was the party's budget director. Milavsky, a prominent Calgary property-firm executive, was the party's long-time chief fundraiser in southern Alberta.

Two days before the meeting, the group's members wrote a one-page document summing up what they wanted to achieve. Among their objectives:

> We should approach the meeting with the view to seeing what can be done to *stabilize the party for the next 18 months*—fall of 1990. See if we can get Don to *change the way he operates* (too much of a recluse and only listens to the Edmonton people). *How does the party feel about the government.* (Poll)? This is what we have to have Don find out, if he doesn't already know. We should *avoid* dealing with the *succession issue*.

They intended to describe the party's internal disturbances bluntly:

> The most important message we bring to you today is that we believe that the party has major problems across the province, but we know for sure that it has major problems in Calgary. So major that we believe that it could cost us the next election, because as you know Calgary is the swing vote to ensure our re-election—if we don't get that swing vote the party will be down the tube. That is how serious we think the situation is.

The group also planned to suggest a political advisory committee. Its suggested members—their names to be offered "if he asks for examples"—were the next thing to an insult. They included not only respected veterans like Lougheed, but Getty's two leadership rivals from 1985: Julian Koziak and Ron Ghitter. Ghitter had written Milavsky on July 17, after a conversation about the upcoming meeting. He said in the letter that he thought the party was seen as old, petty, arrogant, incompetent, lacking any agenda beyond crisis management, increasingly rural, unaware of urban issues, and "too aligned with the business sector." He added that public perception of Getty could not be restored: "It will only get worse. You must extract from him an undertaking not to lead the party in the next election."[15]

The meeting did not take place, for reasons not explained. However, Getty's career eventually ended very much on the terms suggested by the July 22 group. He was replaced by a Premier whose qualities included a strong political base in Calgary and a willingness to act as his own public-relations chief. Just as telling, the ideas that propelled Ralph Klein came out of Calgary, a city that was embracing an international wave of conservative thought and the organizational restructuring movement often summed up as "corporate re-engineering."[19]

But in 1989 Getty was not folding. He went into a Cabinet retreat—an annual planning session attended by all the ministers—and confronted rumours that some ministers thought he should think about retiring. It was the sort of crisis of confidence that made some political leaders come undone. One participant recalled years later that Getty reacted the opposite way: "When the chips were really down, he was pretty good."[20] The embattled Premier gave an emotional speech centred on the idea of a government brotherhood acting for the public good. The potential storm dissipated.

There was never complete comfort. Matters hardly improved when Getty went ahead with the Senate election over Mulroney's objections in October 1989. The PC candidate, veteran Triple-E Senate proponent Bert Brown, was thrashed by Reform candidate Stan Waters. The outcome was an embarrassment for Mulroney. The result could also be read as a repudiation of the Getty government, although many senior Conservatives chose not to interpret it that way.

A poll published in newspapers the following spring had about two-thirds of Albertans saying Getty was doing a poor job and about half saying he should be replaced. The bad news was piling up. So were public reports of unease with Getty's leadership inside the party. A resolution going to the party convention in April 1990 would ask for reinstatement of regular leadership reviews. There was hardnosed, behind-the-scenes manoeuvring to put that idea aside, but Getty overshadowed those tactics with a forceful display of personal leadership that reminded many delegates of why he had been seen as Lougheed's natural successor in the first place.

It was a tough setting. The convention crackled with uncertainty and hints of animosity and fear. Marvin Moore, who had chosen not to run for re-election in 1989, was publicly advocating a leadership review. Getty's keynote speech to more than 1,000 delegates at the Calgary convention centre seemed a crucial test. The crowd gathered and waited in a cavernous hall. A dramatic introduction began. Getty family photos flashed on a giant screen to the accompaniment of music. Tall curtains hung across the front of the darkened stage opened. A spotlight switched on. Getty was suddenly revealed standing at a podium, broad-shouldered, trim and well over six feet tall at age 58. He was welcomed by mixed applause, some weak and some showily enthusiastic. He began to speak and … nothing. The microphone was dead. He was on close display in a scene that seemed to sum up all the unforeseen disasters that had plagued him for the last four years. He did not look the least nervous. Nor impatient, nor angry. He eased into a relaxed, indulgent smile. An anonymous saviour quickly stepped across the stage and flipped a switch that someone had forgot to set on the microphone, ending about 20 seconds of excruciating silence. Relief flooded the hall, and Getty launched into his speech as if nothing much had happened.

He talked about his government's record and its plans. But he kept returning to one theme, and he finally brought the speech to its emotional core: "I guess it comes down to a word, a simple word that guides my life—loyalty. Because, I have built my life around loyalty." He was drawing a line and asking party members where they stood—with him or against him. The implicit challenge rang true because team loyalty had been one of the core values he had lived by for more than 30 years.

The applause afterward was enormous and far more confident. The crowd immediately filed into another room and voted to send the recommendation for a leadership review to a committee for several months of discussion. Party members told reporters everything would be all right if only Getty could be that way all the time; some simply shrugged and said there was plenty of time for a leadership contest before the next election.[19]

The scene was to be replayed a number of times—unhappy events followed by a stolidly persistent Getty somehow rescuing the situation. He would make a similar rousing speech at the 1991 party convention, saying during a new time of uncertainty over the Constitution that Quebec should decide whether it wanted to be part of Canada or not before making demands on the rest of the country. His office would become alert for signs of disloyalty. Relations with Dick Johnston, never easy because of the treasurer's penchant for going his own way, were strained by reports that some members of Johnston's constituency executive in Lethbridge were interested in organizing a leadership bid. Getty also gave Education minister Jim Dinning a clear message to back off in 1991 after Dinning released results of a survey critical of Getty's leadership.[20] But Getty had proved himself calm and capable in a crisis.

The next two years passed in a long political decline to the seemingly inevitable end of resignation. Their background was painted in the sad grey shadows of a nationwide recession, a devastating campaign by the Bank of Canada to kill years of inflation with unusually high interest rates, and a seemingly endless sag in oil and natural gas prices, which meant continued fiscal problems. The recession had put the province and the Premier seemingly back where they had started in early 1986. In 1991 corporate profits in the province dropped by 35.4%, their worst drop in a two-decade span aside from the 48.3% drop in 1986; personal disposable income stalled and drifted back to the national average; population growth continued at only a trickle.[21]

In the middle of depressing circumstances, Getty and his government struggled to produce some action and innovation in his last years in office. He kept the government intact, partly by recruiting impressive new candidates in 1989. Chief among them were well-regarded local politicians such as St. Albert mayor Dick Fowler and Calgary mayor Ralph Klein.

He managed a Cabinet of strong and disparate personalities with understated skill and empathy, leaving them to their own devices where possible and intervening when necessary. Among them, Labour minister Elaine McCoy and her deputy minister, Robin Ford, pioneered the concept of three-year departmental business plans in the late 1980s, a practice that became standard under Ralph Klein's subsequent government. (She was also the originator of Getty's idea for creating a February provincial holiday called Family Day.[22])

Health minister Nancy Betkowski (Nancy MacBeth after a second marriage) and Education minister Jim Dinning took charge of landmark studies of the province's health and education system. Surviving Cabinet memos suggest that Dinning may have sparked the idea for a commission on health care and that Getty supported it over objections from a number of Cabinet ministers, including Marvin Moore, who was minister in charge of health before the 1989 election.[25] The new look at education helped prompt a new emphasis on performance measures and international comparisons.

Energy minister Rick Orman pushed a series of conferences called "Toward 2000 Together." Getty thought of the exercise as only a morale-builder, but it succeeded remarkably at that job, helping create the confidence, the new mix of ideas, and the energy that kept the Conservative Party together for the election of 1993.

Ralph Klein presented a different prospect. He had been a wildly successful mayor of Calgary and chose to become minister of the Environment after his election to the Legislature in 1989. Despite his later occasional dismissals of Getty, Klein said at one point in his Cabinet career:

> He doesn't get involved in nitpicking. If you are a minister, you run that portfolio yourself. He looks at the broad directions. He's the reason I'm here. I find him to be a very basic human individual, the kind of guy I can relate to.[26]

Established ministers regarded Klein as an unreliable upstart. The period after the 1989 election saw Alberta several years into a campaign to develop a pulp and paper industry with the help of Japanese investment. Forestry minister LeRoy Fjordbotten and others were focussed on getting that job done, as was Getty. Klein brought to Cabinet a message that a new public concern about environmental matters had to be accommodated. The tensions were visible in public as well as behind closed doors. The 1991 Conservative Party convention witnessed a charged exchange between Fjordbotten and Klein during a question period with party members. There were attempts to sabotage some of Klein's key initiatives inside the Cabinet room as well.[27] Getty managed to keep all sides working together—salvaging Klein's reputation and backing his push for new overall environmental legislation that some older members of Cabinet wanted to delay, while also pushing the forestry developments hard, sometimes to Klein's discomfort.

The forestry developments eventually yielded several projects, led by two massive pulp mills in northeastern and northwestern Alberta, all encouraged by hundreds of millions of dollars in loans, guarantees, and infrastructure development. Years later a bout of low pulp prices left the province absorbing hundreds of millions of dollars in loan losses. But Getty never regretted pushing ahead with the pulp mills, part of $6 billion in forestry developments during his time as Premier. He saw them in intensely personal terms. He would say in 2002:

> Those young people who before grew up across that northern swing of Alberta always moved out, into Edmonton to find a job. And now, with those projects, the harvesting, the cutting, the upgrading, actually those mills are all run by young northern Albertans who have now stayed in Boyle, stayed in Slave Lake, stayed in High Prairie, stayed in Peace River, in their own communities, and get good management, high-class jobs.[28]

Other projects soaked up similarly large numbers of dollars. About $2.5 billion in credit was made available to farmers at a fixed, 9% interest rate (low at the time). More than 10,000 small businesses had access to $1.1 billion of similar aid. A $222 million program replaced rural telephone party lines with individual service, making computers a viable farm tool. Some of the more obscure initiatives backed by government financing were failing by 1990. In a typical case, an industrial laser firm in Edmonton that had used up about $30 million in public money went under for poorly explained reasons. By the late 1990s the province would have to absorb hundreds of millions of dollars in losses not only on some pulp-mill loans but also on Alberta's share of the Husky Oil upgrader at Lloydminster. Yet in many respects the strategy of supporting capital investment worked. The Husky upgrader, for example, provided a market for years of lucrative production of heavy crude oil that would otherwise have found much less demand than more easily refined light crude.

Meanwhile, the north saw quiet progress on Native land claims. An accord reached in 1989 led to the creation of the country's first Metis land base and a new regime of self-government for the long-established Metis "settlements." Getty personally intervened to try to create an accord between the federal government and a small band of Cree at Lubicon Lake in north-central Alberta. The Lubicon dispute lingered interminably after part of the band split off to reach its own land settlement, but at the time Getty's ability to create a personal understanding with Chief Bernard Ominayak was the only hope for any progress. Another initiative was a federal-provincial task force that spent nearly a year looking at the relationship of Aboriginal peoples to the province's justice system. Its report in December 1991 helped establish the groundwork for innovations such as community sentencing committees.

In 1990 the government agreed to go ahead with an idea that had been contemplated for several years—the privatization of provincially owned Alberta Government Telephones. The sale of stock converting AGT to Telus Corp. was hugely successful and one of the largest privatizations of a Crown corporation in the country. It anticipated rapid changes in telecommunications. It had popular support—give or take complaints about the favourable price set on the company's stock—and it created what would become a significant Canadian competitor for the Bell system.

Rural areas saw hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to counteract continuing weather problems and international subsidy wars. The restructuring of the meat-packing industry created a market for local livestock production. This became the central pillar of Alberta's agricultural community when cattle prices started rising in early 1993.

Edmonton received important supports at a time when the faltering economy stopped its population growth for a few years. One of the most important was a decision to put $100 million into the construction of a new downtown Edmonton campus for Grant MacEwan College. It was a rare bright spot in the city core. In time, its striking architecture and large student population would become an anchor of the rebuilding of the city centre, while also providing a lower-cost, smaller-scale alternative for post-secondary students.

The government also persevered with its successful campaign to hold down spending. By 1992 annual growth in program spending averaged 2.3%—among the lowest rates in the country. The constraints were so tough that Getty had to cope with confidential complaints from some Cabinet ministers who notably joined the cause of spending cuts in Klein's government in 1993—Dinning and Economic Development minister Peter Elzinga. Amid the constant budget turmoil, one small comment passed virtually unnoticed. Johnston told the party convention in 1990 that the government could probably start reducing its debt substantially in the 1994–95 fiscal year, as in fact happened after energy revenues finally turned up again.[59] The spending constraints were undermined, however, by the business investments, which sometimes had lenient terms and inadequate scrutiny, and by the entire government's failure to set an example of personal austerity.

MLAs granted themselves a 30% pay increase in 1989. Afterward, a number of Cabinet ministers took advantage of a plan that let them collect in the range of $20,000 a year in subsidies to maintain a second home in Edmonton, even if they lived just outside the city boundaries. Government members were also building up huge pension credits at a time when other Albertans were more and more worried about their individual financial futures. By late 1992 complaints about these indulgences were starting to pinch hard. Getty did not press to erase them. He was also dogged by personal accusations about favouritism for his new constituency in Stettler, and by a *Globe and Mail* story alleging impropriety in his single-digit percentage ownership of some oil wells while his government regulated the oil business.

There was steadily growing discontent with loans and loan guarantees for businesses. A number of these arrangements were starting to fail, taking scores of millions of dollars in government money with them. No failure hit as hard as the NovAtel debacle. NovAtel Communications, a subsidiary of Alberta Government Telephones, was trying in the late 1980s to stake a claim in a rush to develop cellular telephone business across North America. It used the lever of hundreds of millions of dollars in financing for local cellphone businesses. These deals started collapsing in mid-1990, just as the AGT privatization and conversion into Telus was underway. With only days to spare, the subsidiary was pulled out of the Telus stock offering. From then on, it was on the hands of Alberta taxpayers.

The withdrawal blighted what was otherwise a stellar achievement—one of the most successful and forward-looking privatizations of a Crown corporation in Canadian history. It also raised fears about the province's financial liability. In May 1992 Johnston had to stand in a hushed Legislature and admit that while the company had finally been sold, its meltdown would cost the province $566 million. (The number later edged up to more than $600 million.) Getty ordered an investigation by the province's auditor general the same day. In September 1992 auditor general Donald Salmon reported the financial details of the NovAtel disaster and reported findings on a more strategic level. Salmon said the company had always been poorly run. He pointed to the high degree of interrelationship between the NovAtel and AGT boards of directors. The ties had made internal questioning of business decisions extremely unlikely.[60]

NovAtel became a symbolic landmark overshadowing much of Getty's second term. The tough-minded renewal after the 1989 election wore down under continued financial pressure. Getty had promised a balanced budget in 1991 and was adamant on the issue in Cabinet. Johnston presented one. Some ministers were as skeptical about it as some of the public. The continuing malaise of energy markets and a faltering economy led eventually to a $2.3 billion deficit for the 1991–92 fiscal year. NovAtel and the unreality of the 1991 "balanced budget" symbolized an apparent chronic inability to take hold of the province's business affairs. NovAtel also raised issues of patronage because of the makeup of its and AGT's boards of directors. The patronage concerns played badly at a time when issues like politicians' pensions were starting to rub voters raw.[11] Nevertheless, as had some of the other business failures, NovAtel laid a foundation for future growth—what eventually became a large Nortel Networks presence and a cluster of expertise in telecommunications technology in Calgary—but at a large immediate financial cost that left Alberta voters gasping.

Getty decided to leave politics about a month before Salmon's report on NovAtel was completed. The final blow to his government landed at what should have been a moment of personal triumph. It had started out promisingly.

The Meech Lake Accord had evaporated when it did not receive formal approval by enough provinces by June 1990, the end of the three-year period allowed for ratification. Getty seized the next attempt to rewrite the Constitution as a chance to push the agenda of Senate reform. He now had the strong support of Newfoundland Premier Clyde Wells, who had been the most important opponent of Meech Lake. Mercurial and stubborn, Wells represented a number of smaller provinces that had been warming to the idea of an elected Senate with equal representation for each of them. The most important convert was Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa, an elusive intellect whose refusal to go along could single-handedly have blocked Senate reform. The talks did in fact seem to reach an impasse. As Getty later recalled,

> I was able to convince Robert Bourassa, who was a close friend—he was not a warm, hugging kind of a guy but he was a close friend—and he sat with me a couple of times, just the two of us alone, and he said, "Don, you must have this to sign this accord?" And I said, "Yes, I must." He said, "I don't know how I can do it, I don't know how I can convince my people." But he did.[12]

It was a remarkable breakthrough. Mulroney was a surprised and unhappy observer and tried to water down the Senate provision in later discussions. The final wording of what became known as the Charlottetown Accord contained a full Triple-E program, although there was debate about whether the powers assigned to the Senate were adequate.

That was where matters stood when the accord was committed to writing at the end of August 1992. Getty and his wife Margaret went on a driving vacation over the Labour Day weekend. Getty decided he had had enough and should retire. He told his caucus early in September.

The timing of the announcement left many observers nonplussed. Getty made his decision public several weeks before the national referendum on the Charlottetown Accord scheduled for October 26. The selling of the deal had started poorly with some delay in making the official wording public. Voters were also overwhelmed by the accord's wide sweep and the fuzzy nature of some of the provisions. A natural conservatism set in among many people who wondered about the wisdom of doing too much, too fast, with too much uncertainty.

In this flux, Preston Manning decided to oppose the accord. He disparaged it in partisan terms as the "Mulroney deal" and said the provision for Senate elections was not enough because the Senate's new powers were not spelled out. His intervention may not have been crucial, but it was an important blow, and the accord was voted down in nearly every province.

Getty watched bitterly. He thought Manning was motivated by the prospect of short-term political gain. Getty had managed in six years to take Senate reform from a subject of think-tank discussion papers to the brink of reality. The result was another in a string of unexpected disappointments that had plagued his time in office. This one was in some ways the worst. Getty never forgave Manning for the referendum campaign.

His final weeks in office were not triumphant, but, characteristically, not unproductive either. One of his last acts was to announce a new oil-and-gas royalty structure. It set up a sliding scale of royalty rates that would cut hundreds of millions of dollars from company costs during times of low prices but give the province a bigger share of revenue during times of high prices.

Getty retired several weeks after the referendum, replaced as Progressive Conservative leader by Ralph Klein on December 5 and formally succeeded as Premier several days later. He had already told the province in September that he intended to go hunting with his sons and his dog. It was a typically humble and reserved exit.

He watched the paradoxical emergence of a successor who enjoyed a public image of being one of the ordinary folks. Getty had never been able to achieve that perception, despite his down-to-earth tastes and his strong aversion to political marketing.

He watched the new government take hold of events with a firm, simply stated fiscal agenda of the kind that he had not been able to generate during his several years as Premier. The agenda was clearer, but, on the other hand, so was the province's situation. Public opinion had firmly swung toward a position strongly in favour of spending cuts and strongly against taxation. And the cloud of plain bad luck that had culminated in the recession-marred early 1990s seemed to be breaking up. Livestock prices swung strongly upward through the winter of 1992–93, producing strong new confidence in an agricultural community that the government had spent several years and well over $1 billion propping up. Natural gas prices finally started the upward swing that the industry had hoped for years was around the corner.

Getty moved into small private investing activities, membership on corporate boards, and a routine that included bird hunting in the fall and winters at a resort town in the southern California desert.

He had led a fractious Cabinet and an anxious province through seven of the toughest years ever to face an Alberta government outside of the calamity of the 1930s. His final, unexpected service had been to become the repository of blame for all the disappointments of those years. He was a man of considerable pride and unhappy about his fate, but used to playing in competitions where toughness and a gritty silence counted.

Notes

1. Interview with the author, Edmonton, December 3, 2002.
2. All biographical information from Getty's early life until his move to Edmonton is taken from his unpublished autobiography, provided courtesy of Don Getty.
3. Interview, December 3, 2002.
4. Getty autobiography.
5. Treasury briefings in Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), Accession No. 97.111, Box 2.
6. Interview, December 3, 2002.
7. PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Box 3.
8. Getty autobiography.
9. PAA, Accession No. 97.111, Box 2.
10. Briefing note dated August 11, 1989, prepared by staff in Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs Department prior to Getty meeting with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney: author's notes from PAA. See also Mark Lisac, "Seeds of Alienation over GST," *Edmonton Journal*, December 30, 2000, p. A14.
11. PAA, Accession No. 92.519, Box 62.
12. Various files, PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Box 5.
13. See, for example, Alberta Treasury Department summary October 4, 1985, of Treasury Board global budget planning overview meeting on September 18, 1985, at which Cabinet ministers discussed civil service reductions of preceding three years. Some worried about resulting increases in overtime pay and in pay for temporary workers. "Others expressed the view that dollar savings were not important as long as privatization resulted." PAA, Accession No. 97.111, Box 2. See also Larry Shaben memo of April 1988 recounting that Marvin Moore, while he was minister in charge of hospitals, "encouraged" the Royal Alexandra Hospital in Edmonton to privatize its laundry service: PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Box 14. Various documents from the period indicate a general government direction of permanently reducing the size of the civil service in favour of private-sector service delivery.
14. Ashley Geddes and Mark Lisac, "The Getty Files," *Edmonton Journal*, January 7, 2001, p. E7 (based on documents in PAA).
15. PAA, Accession No. 97.111, Box 2.
16. In the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, Judicial District of Edmonton, Action No. 8703-16333, Final Report of Inspector William E. Code, Q.C. See especially pp. 329–31.
17. PAA, Accession No. 92.519, Box 62. See also Accession No. 95.445, Box 38 for complaint to Alberta Press Council about the golf course photograph and other complaints written to media outlets.
18. Planning for July 22, 1989, meeting and Ghitter's letter of July 17, 1989: PAA, Accession No. 97.111, Box 2.
19. See, for example, Mark Lisac, "Message for Getty at Tory Convention," *Edmonton Journal*, November 4, 1989, p. A11.
20. Confidential interview with a former Cabinet minister, November 2000.
21. Brian Laghi, "Getty Derails Leadership Review," *Edmonton Journal*, April 8, 1990, p. A1; Mark Lisac, "Endorsement of Getty Carries Severe Limits," *Edmonton Journal*, April 8, 1990, p. A5.
22. The information on Johnston was obtained during the confidential interview with a former Cabinet minister, November 2000; that on Dinning comes from the Getty autobiography.
23. Alberta Treasury Department: Alberta Economic Accounts, 1996.

24. PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Box 10.
25. Betkowski wrote Getty a memo dated May 11, 1989, in which she set out new health policy directions that largely describe what happened through the 1990s: holding the line on new hospital construction, a shift toward preventive health and more cooperation between institutions so as to "rationalize and eliminate duplication of inefficient support services." The memo also requested permission to address the Cabinet on these issues on May 25, 1989: PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Box 14.
26. Klein quoted in Getty autobiography.
27. Ashley Geddes and Mark Lisac, "As a Rookie, Klein Got a Rough Ride," *Edmonton Journal*, January 7, 2001, p. E10 (based on documents in PAA). See also Mark Lisac, "Are Tories Committed to Renewing Party?" *Edmonton Journal*, April 8, 1991, p. A9.
28. Interview, December 3, 2002.
29. Various files, PAA, Accession No. 95.445, Boxes 10–21. Dinning wrote Getty on April 19, 1991, that Alberta stood sixth among provinces in per capita spending on education and seventh in per student spending and "I wish it were otherwise." However, Dinning also wrote memos in which he suggested ways of containing health costs. Elzinga wrote that economic ministries were being pressed harder for savings than health, education, or social services. He and Betkowski wrote memos in August 1991, indicating there were tensions inside Cabinet during Getty's last two years as Premier over whether to cut health spending again as had happened in 1987, whether to move toward some degree of privatization, and whether to consolidate services in rural areas.
30. Report of the Auditor General on NovAtel Communications Ltd., September 25, 1992.
31. The Getty papers in the PAA contain the only comprehensively documented evidence showing the day-to-day workings of long-established patronage practices inside the Alberta government. See Ashley Geddes and Mark Lisac, "Papers Lift a Veil on Political Appointments," *Edmonton Journal*, January 7, 2001, p. E8.
32. Interview, December 3, 2002. The interplay between Getty and Bourassa has also been described in various press reports and books about the Charlottetown Accord.

Ralph Klein 1992-

DOREEN BARRIE

Ralph Klein, 1992–

Introduction

Writing about a sitting Premier poses a challenge, since the writer does not have the luxury of hindsight. When that Premier is very popular, it is also hazardous to employ analytical tools that are too sharp. There is no doubt that Alberta's twelfth Premier evokes an emotional response: fierce loyalty in some and fury in others. The following analysis will likely please no one: for supporters it will be too critical; for opponents not critical enough.

Ralph Klein's biographers have noted that his talents have been underestimated ever since he embarked on a career in politics over two decades ago. As the following pages illustrate, on his way to the top of the political ladder the Premier has confounded his critics and more than one opponent. He has maintained his popularity despite his "tough love" approach to governing, an approach that other politicians adopt at their peril.

The Early Years

The province of Alberta in the 1940s and 1950s was a tranquil place. Following the devastation of the Great Depression, the Alberta economy began to recover because of the Second World War; however, it was the oil strike at Leduc that transformed the province forever. Not only did it usher in an era of prosperity, but the nature of Alberta society was also altered. This was all in the future, but while Ralph Klein was growing up Alberta was governed by the Social Credit Party with Ernest Manning as Premier.

Premier Manning was highly respected throughout his long reign. With money flowing into the provincal treasury, Albertans enjoyed the benefits of affluence. Roads, schools, and nursing homes were built, and by the 1960s the province was spending more per capita than any other jurisdiction in the country.[1]

Alberta's affluence blunted the early radicalism that had spawned political experimentation. Opposition in the Legislature was weak, and the breakthrough by the Lougheed Conservatives was possible in part because they stressed that they represented a "new, improved" Social Credit Party. There would thus be a smooth transition to a party that shared the goals and direction of its predecessor. Moreover, there was no social unrest in the province when the young Ralph Klein was growing up. Calgary was not the bustling metropolis it would become in a few short decades, but Alberta was prosperous. The political tranquillity in the province contrasted sharply with the turmoil in Ralph Klein's early life.

Klein's biographers all note that his childhood was far from ideal.[2] His formative years could easily have blighted his entire life. His origins were humble and his early years turbulent. These disadvantages make his rise to the premiership all the more remarkable.

Ralph Klein's father, Philip, was the son of a German immigrant who, with his English wife, homesteaded near Rocky Mountain House. Philip left home at the age of 14 in the midst of the Depression. He drifted, riding the rails and picking up work where he could.

By 1935 he was working in construction and making extra money as a semi-professional boxer and wrestler. Like many young men of his generation, he was eager to fight for his country during World War II. He was rejected, ostensibly on medical grounds, but actually because of his German heritage. He married Florence Harper, a bookkeeper and waitress whose parents lived in the Tuxedo Park neighbourhood in northwest Calgary. Their son Ralph was born on November 1, 1942, and was followed by another boy, Lynn, two years later.

Unfortunately, Klein's parents split up when he was five years old, and the stability in his life evaporated. After that, the family moved frequently; his father went to live in Edmonton, and his mother remarried. Her new husband, a train engineer with the Canadian National Railway, worked in Rocky Mountain House, so the family moved once again. Ralph lived there for a couple of years and then moved in with his father for a few years. Through this very stressful period, his maternal grandparents, Harry and Christine Harper, provided emotional support and a stable home life to their grandchildren whenever necessary.

Given the frequent moves, it is not surprising that Ralph did not excel in school, leaving at the beginning of grade 11 to join the air force. Frank Dabbs speculates that he might have been drawn to the air force to "replace the family that had been taken away a dozen years earlier, when his parents separated."[7] His air force career was short-lived, and he returned from Portage la Prairie a year later, shortly after his eighteenth birthday. His girlfriend Hilda Hepner accompanied him home, and they were married soon after, in April 1961. They had two children, Bradley and Angela. The young couple moved to Calgary's Tuxedo Park neighbourhood where they lived for several years.

Soon after his return to Calgary, Klein enrolled at the Calgary Business College for vocational training. He studied accounting and business administration, and on completion of his studies the owner offered him a teaching job at the College. By 1963, when he left for greener pastures, he had become principal. His career move took him to the southern Alberta division office of the Canadian Red Cross where he was hired as public relations director. His job required a great deal of writing, which initially taxed his skills, but he enjoyed the socializing that went with the job. According to Don Martin, he developed the ability "to massage the message" and cultivate personal relationships with journalists in Calgary and in small towns.[8] His relationship with the media to this day is quite similar.

From the Red Cross Klein moved on to another public relations position, this one at Calgary United Appeal. His final career move before his foray into municipal politics, a natural progression from public relations, was to CFCN, a local radio and TV station. Initially he worked in radio, but eventually became a TV reporter, with City Hall as his beat.

Klein's personal life was not on the same trajectory as his professional life. His marriage to Hilda was not working. His wife resented the long hours he put in, leaving her to bring up the children on her own. He admits that the marriage was "rocky and sometimes violent."[9] The relationship ended in divorce soon after Klein met Colleen, his second wife, who had recently escaped an abusive relationship. They were married in the basement of his in-laws' home in Calgary, and now at the age of 29 Ralph had a second family, since

Colleen had two girls aged 11 and 7 from her first marriage. They also have their own child, who was born in 1973. Dabbs refers to Colleen Klein as her husband's emotional rock, confidante, and linchpin in a relationship that surprised Philip Klein "for its warmth and humanity."

During his years as a TV reporter, Klein gained a reputation for obtaining information in unorthodox ways and from unusual sources. The city beat was not confined to civic politics, but included crime, the justice system, and news on communities. In the process of covering a range of stories, he developed insights into, and wrote sensitively on, the plight of Natives in the city, motorcycle gangs, and the Chinese community.

One story that had a lasting impact on the future Premier was his assignment to investigate how the Blackfoot felt about their treatment under Treaty 7. The one hundredth anniversary of the Treaty was commemorated in 1977 with Prince Charles in attendance. CFCN TV dispatched Klein to the Siksika First Nations Reserve at Gleichen, where he stayed and worked on the story for three weeks, a period that Dabbs describes as his epiphany. On this assignment Klein was not the objective reporter observing events from some lofty perch; he became part of the story. He was assigned a spiritual adviser and was introduced to rituals of the Siksika, such as the sweat lodge ceremonies and the ritual burning of sweet grass. But he went further; he began to study the language and tribal traditions of the Blackfoot. The documentary was angry, moving, and disturbing. It drew attention to the gap between the intentions of the white signatories to Treaty 7 and the reality of the lives of Aboriginal people on reserves. It also included Klein's personal response to the Blackfoot and their response to him. He retained a special relationship with the Blackfoot for many years thereafter. In 1993 he became the second white person in history to be adopted into the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation, and the Blood Tribe made him an honorary chief in 1996.

Politics

In August 1980, when Ralph Klein announced to his colleagues that he was going to run for mayor, they laughed. It would not be the last time that his political ambitions would provoke laughter.

Even Klein's father was sceptical about his son's plans, but he lent him his battered motorhome to use for the campaign. Of necessity it was run on a shoestring budget with a few dedicated volunteers, including Rod Love, who would stay by his side for the next 17 years. Klein campaigned as an outsider who would shake up city hall. His stunning victory shocked and surprised many people. On election night his mother commented to reporters that he was too thin-skinned to be a politician.

One of the promises Klein made during his campaign was that he would communicate the business of the city to Calgarians. To achieve that goal, he perfected a media strategy that he had partially honed while in public relations. He developed a good relationship with his former media colleagues, singling out some for selective leaks, particularly with regard to the Olympics. Klein was critical of the secrecy surrounding board meetings of the Organizing Committee for the Olympics (OCO) and pushed for greater transparency. OCO members suspected the mayor when minutes and documents found their way into the hands of journalists.

Organizers of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games were not enthusiastic about the upstart new mayor, especially because protocol decreed that while cities host the Games the mayor of the city ranks second to the chairman of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). They were even less enthusiastic about his suggestion that Blackfoot dancers perform the sweet grass ceremony and dance at an IOC meeting in Montreal. Klein prevailed, the dancers were a hit, and IOC Chairman, Juan Antonio Samaranch, was charmed.

Many Calgarians were won over by their new mayor, although others were disappointed when he reversed his stand on some issues and demonstrated that he could play hardball. During the election, Klein had opposed construction of Olympic Plaza and the building of the Light Rail Transit line through a northwest community. Both these projects subsequently went ahead. When there was community opposition to the site chosen for the Saddledome, Klein asserted that real people were not opposed to development and labelled opponents "community mercenaries."[illegible]

Despite some bumps in the road, Ralph Klein won his third straight victory in the 1986 municipal election with a record 90% of the vote. His victory ensured that he would play host at the Olympics in 1988. The mayor relished the prospect of playing a central role in an event that would be etched in the memories of Calgarians as a heady, glorious 15 days. It was a golden opportunity to show the world, or perhaps more importantly the rest of Canada, how sophisticated yet friendly the city was. To say that gregarious Mayor Klein enjoyed himself would be an understatement. He still considers the Olympics to be the highlight of his political career.[illegible]

With a successful and profitable Winter Olympics on his resume, the mayor now pondered his future plans. He could pursue a career in the private sector or move higher up the political ladder to provincial or federal politics. According to Dabbs, a federal Cabinet seat was on offer from Prime Minister Mulroney, but Colleen Klein did not want to move to Ottawa while their daughter was still a teenager.[illegible] The provincial Liberals were looking for a new leader, but Klein was more receptive when the Conservatives came calling.

The Getty government was in dire straits when the Premier approached Calgary's popular mayor to suggest he move to the provincial Cabinet. Klein's debut, in January 1989, was not auspicious and foreshadowed the problems he would experience as he made the transition from the individualism of municipal politics to a venue that requires a politician to be a team player. At the news conference announcing his decision, he blurted out that Getty had promised him not only a Cabinet post but also the job of "southern lieutenant." Not surprisingly, the news was not well received in Edmonton where Tories who had toiled for years on behalf of the party resented the interloper who was believed to be a Liberal.

Don Getty called an election for March 20, giving Klein just over three months to prepare for a more challenging campaign than he had ever experienced at the municipal level. Calgary Elbow, the riding he chose to run in, was not a natural "fit" for a man who had succeeded in municipal politics on the strength of his credentials as an outsider, someone who did not belong in an exclusive club. The constituency included affluent neighbourhoods, and his Liberal opponent, Gib Clark, was a Calgary lawyer with impeccable credentials. The main attraction was that Dave Russell, the incumbent, had announced his intention to step down. Klein had to fight for the nomination, but won the fight easily.

However, in the process he got another taste of the hostility he would have to contend with within the party as his career advanced.

This provincial campaign in March 1989 was a far cry from Klein's last mayoralty race. In Calgary Elbow he received 49% of the votes cast, a margin of just over 800 votes. The tight election race caused the former mayor to wonder whether he had made a dreadful mistake moving out of the comfortable cocoon of civic politics. Because Don Getty had lost his seat in Edmonton, Ralph Klein arrived in Edmonton unprotected, facing new colleagues who wanted to ensure he got his comeuppance. His difficulty in getting up in the morning, a habit he developed during his years as a reporter and in municipal politics, was not regarded indulgently at the provincial level. Party Whip Stockwell Day was not amused when he had to get Klein out of bed more than once.

The former mayor was given the Environment portfolio, his second choice, and one that was fraught with problems at the time. Dabbs contends that he had walked into "an eco-trap" of controversial issues and problems surrounding the Oldman Dam, the Alberta-Pacific pulp mill, and the Swan Hills waste treatment plant.

Klein approached his new job with enthusiasm, travelling around the province, visiting trouble spots, popping up all over to familiarize himself with the portfolio and also to put a human face on it. Environmentalists who had hoped that the "outsider" would reverse decisions such as the one to proceed with the Oldman Dam were disappointed. An activist who gave the Environment minister the one-finger salute at the announcement giving the Al-Pac plant the green light saw it reciprocated by a furious Klein. Not surprisingly, the incident, captured by a photographer, made headline news.

In spite of some opposition, Klein gained a degree of respect from both environmentalists and caucus during his term in Environment. Rich Vivone, author of the weekly political newsletter *Insight*, commented at the time that some "are grudgingly starting to admit that Mr. Klein, who came to the Legislature with a reputation for being a fast-talking buffoon, may be the best Environment minister since the Conservatives won power in 1971." Referring to the province's new environmental legislation, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, piloted through the Legislature after public input, Vivone concluded that "through smart politics, a congenial personality, and plenty of work" Klein had turned an explosive situation around. Despite these achievements, by the fall of 1992 Klein was still a "lone ranger" in caucus with a reputation as an intellectual lightweight.

When Don Getty stepped down in September 1992, many high-profile candidates threw their hats in the ring. The process for choosing the new leader was altered. Candidates had to pay an entry fee of $5,000 and present a petition signed by 500 party members to be eligible to run. In the leadership vote itself, every party member was eligible to cast a ballot. A further provision, which proved to be crucial, was that there was no cut-off for signing up new members; they could join the party moments before they voted. This meant that if a second ballot was necessary new members could potentially sway the result.

As Martin points out, the process favoured Klein because he "could win it in the back alleys, the wheat fields, and the burger joints of Alberta, without wooing constituency presidents or party directors." Had the contest depended on the support of party luminaries, Klein, still a carpetbagger as far as the party brass was concerned, would surely have been unsuccessful in his bid for the crown. When the race got underway, there were nine candidates vying for the leadership of a party that was slumping in the polls. Of the group, six were in Cabinet, and the early favourite was Nancy Betkowski.

Having held high-profile portfolios like Education and then Health Care, Betkowski's credentials were impressive. She was personable, cultured, intelligent and by all accounts had acquitted herself well in Cabinet. The party establishment favoured her candidacy, as did former Premier Lougheed's two sons. However, despite the support she had behind the scenes, Betkowski did not have the common touch. Although she did surprisingly well in Calgary, rural Alberta was alien territory to her. During a campaign stop at the livestock auction mart in Stettler, the cattle crowd was singularly unimpressed that she arrived late and stayed for only a couple of minutes. Betkowski's failure to connect with rural Alberta and her perceived insensitivity to rural issues cost her dearly in her leadership bid.

When the vote was held on November 28, 1992, Betkowski got the highest number of votes, but her lead was a single vote. In Calgary Elbow she received more than double the vote of her opponent (55% to 25%). However, because she failed to receive a majority of the vote, a run-off vote had to be held a week later. Klein's team went into high gear, with each MLA supporting him promising to deliver 700 votes on the second ballot. The Betkowski camp made a fatal error in assuming that because all but one of the defeated candidates threw their support behind her victory was assured. This development actually worked in Klein's favour because his team could claim that "the establishment" was against his leadership bid. This went over well outside the cities, and in a bid to strengthen his support in rural areas Klein reminded that community that his opponent threatened rural hospitals.

The second ballot gave a resounding victory to Ralph Klein. He received 60% of the vote to Betkowski's 40%. The result demonstrated the complacency that had characterized Betkowski's camp. While Klein tripled his share of the vote in rural Alberta and doubled it in Calgary, she doubled her vote in Edmonton, but made negligible gains elsewhere. Alberta's twelfth Premier was set to take over the reins and bring about sweeping changes, but first he had to win the election.

Premier Klein

Don Getty was not a hard act to follow. When he took office the province was debt free, but throughout his term annual deficits averaged $2.3 billion. A few months after he stepped down, the net debt had climbed to $11 billion. Frank Dabbs argues that when Klein became party leader the Alberta Conservatives were "dead and waiting to be buried" because of the degree of public anger and the belief that they would never clean their own house.

Support for the Tories had declined to around 30%. It was an uphill battle, but the new Premier's task was to restore faith in the party before the election. It took roughly six months to achieve this objective, and in the interim the new Premier set out to distance himself from Getty's legacy and convince Albertans that the province was under new management. Even though the new Conservative regime portrayed itself as a complete break with the past, it implemented policies that had been under consideration by the Getty government.

Peter J. Smith comments that the Klein government was not as original as it claimed to be, borrowing as it did from the report of a 1991 provincial initiative called *Toward 2000 Together*, which had culminated in a conference attended by 550 well-connected participants. The goal of *Toward 2000 Together* was to prepare the province for the twenty-first century by adopting measures that are now familiar to Albertans: eliminating the deficit, reducing the debt, and shrinking the government. A competitive tax system was another tool to help attract investment from business and industry.[23]

Klein embraced these recommendations in his leadership campaign and adopted them when mapping out his government's strategy. The recommendations "became the centre of the government's public strategies."[24] The road map to the Alberta Advantage, which would become familiar to Albertans shortly thereafter, was already being drawn.

Attacking the Deficit

The government's first priority was to attack the sorry state of the province's finances, and the Provincial Treasurer, Jim Dinning, set up a Financial Review Commission (FRC) to look into them. Heading up the Commission was the chairman of TransAlta Utilities, whose instructions were to examine the books and tell the unvarnished truth. Implicit in these instructions was the understanding that the bleaker the picture, the more useful it would be politically.[25]

The FRC did not disappoint when it issued its report. It painted Alberta as Mexico North with an unacceptable deficit and unsupportable debt. This was music to the Premier's ears because there was now an external authority advising the government to do what it had wanted to do all along. This strategy would become familiar in subsequent years, as the Klein government would "contract out" unpleasant tasks to bodies like regional health authorities, school boards, and municipal governments.

Another important recommendation of the FRC related to the way in which the government reported its financial situation. The clear message was that budget estimates should be based on realistic revenue and expenditure assumptions. During Getty's reign, the Treasurer had routinely overestimated the price of oil in budget documents, and these inflated estimates had resulted in budget shortfalls.[26]

When the books were being examined, Klein set out to demonstrate openness in other aspects of his government. He had already opened his office to tours and invited all Legislature staff to a Christmas party. This unprecedented event cemented his reputation as an ordinary guy who happened to be Premier. He also carried the message that this was a very different government to the outposts of the province. He deflected awkward questions about his role in the Getty Cabinet and resorted to explaining his message with slogans like: "We have a spending problem, not a revenue problem," "You can't cross a canyon in two leaps," and, to justify cuts to health care, education, and social services, "You have to hunt where the ducks are."[27] These catchy sayings soon crept into the vocabulary of ordinary Albertans, providing an easily understood explanation for some very controversial and complex decisions.

The government also invented a simple parable just in case Albertans had not understood the gravity of the situation. While the FKC was carrying out its investigation, Dinning held a Budget Roundtable for which a workbook, *Right on the Money*, was produced. It tells the story of a couple, Al and Berta, who are comfortably off until Al has to take a major pay cut or lose his job. Berta's job is also insecure, so what do they do? How can they adjust to the change from "a comfortable lifestyle to a family struggling to make just the minimum payment each month on the credit cards, let alone retire the principal? Like their city, their province, and their country, Al and Berta face a mounting debt and a new reality, and it isn't pretty… . The story of Al and Berta is not much different from the story of Alberta."[32] This was not the last time the government drew parallels between families and the government. It also likened its restructuring campaign to renovations to a family home.

The budget debate in May 1993 was overshadowed by a public furore about the MLA pension plan. This controversy threatened to derail the government's re-election plans. At issue were not only the generous payments under the plan but also the "double-dipping" that allowed former Cabinet ministers who were now sitting as backbenchers to draw a pension immediately. Despite Klein's attempts to defuse the situation by amending the plan, public fears and anger were undiminished, so he eliminated it. His personal credibility increased and the party's fortunes rose as a result of this decision.

Klein's bold action on MLA pensions reveals that he can do the unexpected to keep his opponents off balance. His capacity to surprise was evident in 1982 when he was in civic politics. When his ill-considered remarks blaming "eastern bums and creeps" for Calgary's problems caused outrage, he transformed a public relations disaster into a triumph. He travelled to central Canada to express his remorse, and the highlight of the trip was his "punishment," a picture of him behind bars in a Quebec City jail.

Prior to the 1993 election, the government laid out its four-year timetable to eliminate the deficit in the Deficit Elimination Act. Passed in May 1993, the Act limited fiscal deficits over four years, starting in fiscal year 1993–94. The government vowed to reduce program spending by 20%.

This was an important building block in the reconstruction of the Conservative Party, one designed to signal its determination to embrace fiscal prudence. The Premier paved the way by repeatedly stating that it was excessive spending that had placed the finances in such a precarious position. The budget was to be cut by one-fifth at breakneck speed. Ralph Klein was promising to blaze a trail, going where no Canadian politician had dared to go before. There were grave doubts that he would stay the course, the expectation being that his government would capitulate in the face of opposition or that the medicine would prove too harsh for the population.

An election was called for June 15, and Albertans were faced with a choice between the incumbent Conservatives, with a new leader, and the Liberals, led by Edmonton's Laurence Decore. Both parties, with former mayors at the helm, were prescribing more or less the same medicine: massive cuts or brutal cuts.[33] The New Democrats favoured tax hikes to address the deficit problem and to preserve health and education. Their message fell on deaf ears, since Albertans were now primed to focus on deficit reduction on the expenditure side of the ledger.

On election night, Ralph Klein's Conservatives pulled off a stunning victory, winning 51 seats to the Liberals' 32. The New Democrats were erased from the political landscape. The margin of victory is more modest if one looks at the share of the popular vote: the Conservatives secured 44%, roughly 4% more than the Liberals. Six months earlier, the Conservatives had been in serious trouble, trailing in the polls and trying to induce collective amnesia in the population about the Getty government's performance. Now Albertans had once again entrusted their fate to the party.

There are different explanations for the Conservative victory, but the pundits agree that the main reason for the election victory was Klein's skill as a communicator. He perfected the image of an ordinary guy who wanted only to do right by the people. He admitted mistakes, came across as caring, and presented a sharp contrast to his competent but less colourful opponent. He seems to enjoy nothing more than ambling around and socializing, "a walking Mr. Happy Face," as Lisac described him.[12] This quality would serve him well when his government began to make serious cuts to government programs and to lay off government employees.

Beginning in Klein's first term as Premier, the role played by the government was transformed. Whether one calls it reinvention, restructuring, or streamlining, the provincial state over a decade later bears little resemblance to the regime inherited from Don Getty. It is also vastly different from the province presided over by Peter Lougheed. A comment by Tory MLA Richard Magnus in 1994 summed up his government's priorities and signalled what lay ahead:

> There is too much administration in the education system that diverts dollars from the classroom, too much administration and regulation in the health care system that diverts dollars from community-based health care, too much subsidization of the true cost of municipal services, too many people dependent on social assistance instead of using it as a bridge to new skills; on and on it goes; there are too many good people trapped in bad systems, and we are going to break that cycle.[13]

In numerous statements such as this one, the message was clear. Alberta was overgoverned. The culprits were civil servants who had job security and were relatively well paid. The size of the public service was going to be reduced, and Vivone remarked that this "would be applauded throughout the province by those who believe the civil service is fat, bloated, and inefficient."[14] In addition to civil servants, those dependent upon government programs were also targeted. They were to be weaned off this addiction and encouraged to become more self-reliant.

According to the first budget unveiled after the June election, the province's financial situation was less than rosy. The deficit for the 1992–93 fiscal year was reported to be $3.4 billion.[15] Just over a decade later, there would be a surplus of an almost identical amount, $3.3 billion.

A great deal has happened in the intervening years, but the period following the 1993 election is arguably of the greatest interest because the "Klein Revolution" was in progress. The reaction to it within the province as well as outside (nationally and internationally) is probably as interesting as the deficit reduction strategy itself. For a time, the province became a sort of social laboratory in which an experiment was being conducted. Politicians in other jurisdictions watched with more than academic interest, since many of them were in similar financial straits. Observers were keen to see how much pain Albertans would tolerate before they revolted or the government's resolve crumbled. A very gratifying development was the interest shown by American newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* as well as the *Financial Times* of London. Perhaps even more satisfying was the positive attention from the Ontario government, which dispatched civil servants to Edmonton to learn some lessons on cost-cutting. For a population that is often ignored and sometimes maligned, especially in central Canada, it was pleasing to be seen as a role model for others to follow.

If the provincial government was a role model for other governments, Albertans were guinea pigs. It is a testament to Klein's persuasive abilities that brutal cuts in government programs were accomplished with relatively little public outcry.

To refer to the government's attack on the deficit as "aggressive" is something of an understatement. Wielding a metaphorical machete, the government left little untouched—and it started right at the top. To underline the message that no one would be spared, the Premier and Cabinet took a 5% pay cut. This was accompanied by the announcement that 1,000 positions, including those of six deputy ministers, would be eliminated. All grants to schools, hospitals, post-secondary institutions, and municipalities were frozen. The threat of looming layoffs provided incentives for government workers to acquiesce to a 5% pay reduction. These actions were symbolically important because Albertans had to feel they were part of a provincewide campaign of belt-tightening in which even seniors were proud to "share the pain." Barry Cooper and Mebs Kanji explain the importance of cultivating this collective mindset: "Pride induces a sense of accomplishment and inspires the sense that we are all in this together as citizens and not as private individuals, each with his or her own particular interests."

With an air of crisis hanging over the province, Albertans accepted their Premier's "causal story." According to Patrick Wilson, such stories, which are "broadly drawn interpretations of particular events that generate powerful imagery," are essential in campaigns such as the one Alberta embarked upon. The cause of the province's woes was identified as a spending problem, and therefore expenditures needed to be cut. Another element in the imagery was the picture of future generations bearing the burden of this generation's profligacy.

Six months after the election, Ralph Klein reinforced these themes in a television appearance just before the announcement of mind-numbing cuts, including $280 million to health care, $245 million to education, $140 million to post-secondary education and $100 million to social services. Funding for kindergarten was cut in half—no department was spared.

The Klein government's refusal to be deflected from its course won it a lot of support. Until then, politicians had been more inclined to bribe taxpayers than to lecture them about their unrealistic expectations. The Premier was seen as courageous, a rare politician who told the truth, a man who, having promised to do something necessary but unpleasant, did not flinch or falter. The Premier's firm resolve during this period lives on in the memories of Albertans and contributes to his continuing popularity.

The deficit was eliminated in 1995, two years ahead of schedule. Undoubtedly the severe expenditure cuts played a role, but the balanced budget was also made possible by an economy that had begun to fire on all cylinders. Oil prices recovered, natural gas prices rose, corporate tax revenue more than doubled, and gambling poured money into provincial coffers. Revenue from gambling ($689 million) was greater than that from oil royalties by 1997.[40]

We can only speculate as to whether the Klein government would have continued along the tough road it had mapped out if the provincial economy had gone into a tailspin. It is also unclear if Albertans would have remained supportive had the cuts continued. A recovering economy meant that neither scenario was put to the test. This much is clear: it is much easier to justify brutal cuts to important programs when the cupboard is bare. Nevertheless, the first objective of the Klein revolution had been met: the province's deficit had been eliminated and the debt greatly reduced.

Although being in the black was welcome news, the embarrassment of riches did put a dent in the causal story that expenditure cuts were still necessary.[41] The problem then became how to justify the "reinvestment" in public services that had come under the knife, while maintaining the image of being fiscally prudent.

Some observers began to express concern that, having balanced the books, the Klein government was reverting to the free-spending days of previous administrations. As large surpluses began to be posted, the government dramatically increased spending—by 60% between 1997 and 2001.[42] John Carpay of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation dubbed the Klein government "My Big Fat Alberta Government"; Roger Gibbins, president of the Canada West Foundation, remarked that Klein's revolution was "beginning to look like an episode, not a transformation. He is drifting back to a hodgepodge style of government without much cohesion or focus."[43] Cooper and Kanji fear that opening the provincial purse might undo the political education and electoral "priming" that the original agenda had achieved.[44]

Reinventing Government

The next element in the revolution was reinventing government: restructuring government so it operated more efficiently and cheaply. While streamlining government operations, contracting out, and privatization were part of the process, the extent to which public sector reform was achieved is questionable.

How carefully did the Alberta government go about reinventing itself? Martin reports that Treasurer Jim Dinning admitted there was "a lot of testosterone" and "a certain amount of ideology" around the table when decisions were made. Martin notes that "[w]ith barely any study, the Tories spun off land titles, motor vehicles registration, and driver testing to private operators."[45] They had already privatized all the government liquor stores in the province.

To help the government with its restructuring, Ted Gaebler, co-author of *Reinventing Government*, paid frequent visits to the province as did Roger Douglas, former Treasurer in the New Zealand Labour government and the architect of sweeping reforms in that country.[46] Scholars like Herman Schwartz cast doubt on whether restructuring in Alberta was really achieved. Comparing the process in Alberta with that in New Zealand, Schwartz concluded that spending cuts were the driving force for fiscal balance in Alberta. In contrast, in New Zealand the primary thrust was fostering greater public sector efficiency. He argues that the Alberta Conservatives "abjured rising debt and risked cutting complex systems of service delivery so deeply that these systems might no longer function effectively." He wonders whether Alberta's public sector can survive and adjust to the province's rapid attainment of large structural surpluses.[illegible]

Restructuring large, complex organizations, whether public or private, is no easy task. Entrenched interests become adept at appearing to embrace radical change, while making minor adjustments. As the Klein government wanted to move rapidly, there was no time to reflect on the possible long-term consequences of divesting itself of so many functions. As the Dinning quote demonstrates, major changes were made almost on the fly. The government's perception of its role was revealed in the Government Organization Act, which came into force in January 1995. This law permits ministers to turn over anything they do "to any person" without the inconvenience of having to go back to the Legislature for approval.[illegible]

Ready for the New Economy

While the public sector has not been restructured as it was in New Zealand, it can be argued that the Klein government is very much on the cutting edge in another respect. What the government refers to as the Alberta Advantage fits very neatly with the imperatives of globalization: the economic pressures of a world where borders have become permeable and where trade barriers not only to goods, but increasingly also to services, are tumbling rapidly. What is required in this new economy is retrenchment of the state, in particular the welfare state, deregulation, and low taxes. In other words, jurisdictions must compete for investment on a global scale, lowering the costs of doing business so investors will find a congenial home.

For much of Canada's history, the resource base created regionally specific economies; for the most part, the provinces were not in competition with one another. That has all changed in the "New Economy," and competition for investors is fierce. Geographic location and natural resources are not important in the "knowledge-based economy"; therefore, competition among the Canadian provinces has accelerated.

Alberta has been fast out of the gate in this new era, responding to the new economic imperative with enthusiasm. The province claims to have the lowest taxes in the country (although some, like the British Columbia government, challenge this), has deregulated, and is redefining the role it plays in the economy and in society. The province has been extremely successful in attracting investment, and a report by the TD Bank in 2003 catalogues the attractions of the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.[illegible] It lists market opportunities, low taxes and low business costs, natural resource wealth, and a high-quality education system among the advantages of the region. Summarizing the benefits, it states that

> [t]he Calgary-Edmonton corridor is Canada's western tiger. Over the past decade, the region has registered explosive real economic growth

> and population increases surpassing rates chalked up in the majority of North American urban centres. Today, the corridor is the only urban region in Canada to rival US metropolitan areas in terms of both productivity and standard of living… . Given all of its assets, the corridor enjoys enormous potential—not only to widen its economic lead within Canada, but to become the region that stands out as the most prosperous and best place to live in all of North America.

While the TD Bank's analysis documents the advantages of this region of the province, it also notes some problems that must be addressed, including the high cost of post-secondary education and the backlog in capital spending for infrastructure, which, by the government's own estimate, was $7 billion in 2003. Nevertheless, the Klein government can rightfully take credit for the province's favourable economic position, since it has been in power for over a decade. During that time it has responded to market pressures and has succeeded in placing the province in a favourable position in the new economy.

In attaining Alberta's status as a place to invest, the Klein government has adopted measures that signal a retrenchment to an era that pre-dates the welfare state. This was a time when the marketplace determined a great deal of social and economic activity, with government acting as a referee on the sidelines.

It must be emphasized that Alberta is not the only jurisdiction undergoing such a makeover. Referring to privatization of the welfare state in the late 1980s, Jacqueline Ismael saw this trend as "part of a broader process of devolution of responsibility for social provision to the needy from the public to the private sector." She describes it as a model in which the market, the family, and philanthropy are the primary providers. Furthermore, as this policy shifts responsibility for service provision from the public sector to private markets, it creates "a political buffer against public discontent in an era of fiscal restraint and economic restructuring, and an administrative buffer against service accountability." This describes the situation in Alberta quite accurately.

Shifting the burden for unpopular decisions to other actors is part of the strategy of "obfuscation." Wilson analysed Alberta's deficit reduction campaign and pointed out the strategy might "entail the creation of new institutional arrangements that confuse the lines of responsibility or simply [pass] the costs of the program from one level of government to another." The newly created regional health authorities are a good example of such a buffer. These new institutions are on the front lines, taking the heat for budget cuts imposed by the provincial government.

Despite the depth of the cuts and the widespread hardship, the Klein government's popularity remained high. In polling done in May 1995, Archer and Gibbins found that while most respondents favoured the general thrust of the government's deficit reduction program, they also felt that most groups were losers. A clear majority felt that big business was the unequivocal winner at the expense of groups that included students, seniors, and the poor. In addition, when asked about the size of budget cuts to specific areas, a majority of respondents stated that cuts to health, education, and post-secondary education were too large. Nevertheless, there was broad support for the government's agenda, reflecting "a rather tough edge to the public opinion environment."

Explaining Klein's Popularity

Outsiders wondered if Albertans were in the grip of mass delusion or were masochists because the government's popularity continued unabated even while cost-cutting was in progress. The most straightforward explanation for public reaction is that the deliberate strategy of moving rapidly and simultaneously on a number of fronts did not give opposition an opportunity to mobilize. The provincial government followed the advice of former New Zealand Treasurer Roger Douglas, who perfected these tactics in his country. The prosperous economy and Klein's personal popularity undoubtedly played a role. However, the response from the population was also conditioned by political experiences unique to Alberta.

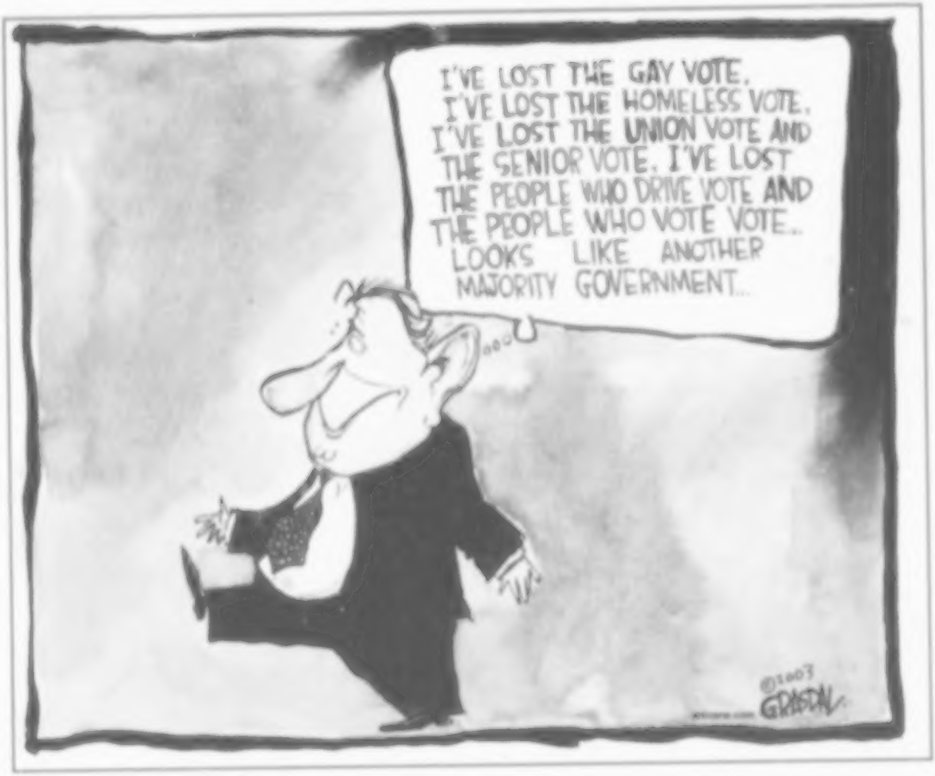
During the 1992 US presidential election campaign, Bill Clinton's campaign manager, James Carville, uttered the now-famous phrase, "It's the economy, stupid," which neatly captures the impact of the economy on voter choice.[58] The Alberta economy began to recover about two years after the Conservatives were re-elected in 1993. Since then revenues have poured in and voters have been generally satisfied, giving credence to Carville's utterance. The outstanding growth in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor, mega-projects at Fort McMurray, and low unemployment in the province all testify to a healthy economy.

Besides prosperity, the Premier's personality contributed to his government's popularity. Coming to power when Albertans (and Canadians) were turned off slick politicians like Brian Mulroney, Ralph Klein was a breath of fresh air. He did not look or act like a typical politician. *National Post* columnist Roy MacGregor typifies the reaction to the Premier:

> To say Ralph Klein is a different kind of politician is to understate severely his remarkable story. Short and often rumpled, he seems to come more out of a Tolkein book than a political manual, his elfin appearance more cuddly than striking, his manner more in keeping with pumping your gas than pumping your hand.[59]

In an era when public tastes run to rippling biceps and filmstar looks, Klein presents the opposite image—someone who makes people feel comfortable. Perhaps this is why people are disarmed. Mark Lisac, who watched Klein during a visit to South Korea in 1993, commented on his uncanny ability to communicate when dealing with officials from the largest Korean companies: "When he talked, you could close your eyes and swear you were in Ponoka or Lethbridge. Alberta voters, Korean business leaders, were all the same to Ralph Klein. They were all just plain folks. And here was the most surprising thing of all—they responded to him much like a crowd in Ponoka or Lethbridge."[60]

The Premier remains popular with Albertans for many reasons, but his ability to admit mistakes, ask forgiveness, and move on is remarkably effective. After a controversial late-night visit to a homeless shelter in Edmonton in December 2002, he made a public apology and confessed that he had an alcohol problem. Far from damaging his reputation, the incident evoked sympathy for his human fallibility. Another quality that Albertans admire in their Premier is his informality and unpretentiousness: he lives in the same modest house he owned before he entered politics, and according to Martin he occasionally vacuums and takes his wife's vehicle to a car wash.[61]


I'VE LOST THE GAY VOTE, I'VE LOST THE HOMELESS VOTE, I'VE LOST THE UNION VOTE AND THE SENIOR VOTE. I'VE LOST THE PEOPLE WHO DRIVE VOTE AND THE PEOPLE WHO VOTE VOTE.. LOOKS LIKE ANOTHER MAJORITY GOVERNMENT..
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COURTESY ARTISANS SYNDICATE, EDMONTON

Despite seeming "missteps," which have alienated various groups, Ralph Klein has shown an uncanny ability to tap into the public mood, winning a string of majority governments in the process.

It was no mean feat that Klein could gain the trust of voters in the wake of public disillusionment over the GST and the failed constitutional amendments. Most politicians were tainted, but Alberta's new Premier escaped public ire.

In addition to the above factors, an understanding of Alberta's political history sheds light on the Klein government's success. When Alberta became a province in 1905, formative experiences stunted the growth of opposition parties and engendered resentment and suspicion of the federal government. In general, all three prairie provinces felt that their status was colonial and that Confederation worked for the benefit of central Canada.[illegible]

Albertans were conditioned to favour non-partisanship because party discipline was not a feature of the Territorial Legislature. This habit might not have survived if political parties had acquitted themselves well after 1905. However, a railway scandal in the new provincial government's first term soured Albertans against political parties, particularly "old line, traditional parties." L.G. Thomas regards this as a pivotal fact in Alberta politics, one that drove the first nail into the coffin of political parties.[illegible] Already unconvinced that legislatures should divide along partisan lines, the experience of that first generation of Albertans did nothing to persuade them otherwise.

Arguably, what also crept in alongside the scepticism about parties was the notion that opposition (perhaps even dissent) was an unnecessary luxury. This has been borne out by the behaviour of parties and politicians ever since.

Both the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) and Social Credit governments eschewed partisanship.[illegible] Henry Wise Wood, president of the UFA organization, denounced "partyism," believing that parties divided the people unnecessarily.[illegible] It is not difficult to see how this line of thinking lends itself to the depoliticizing of government by denying the underlying power relationship present in any polity and encouraging the convenient notion that governing is just sound management.

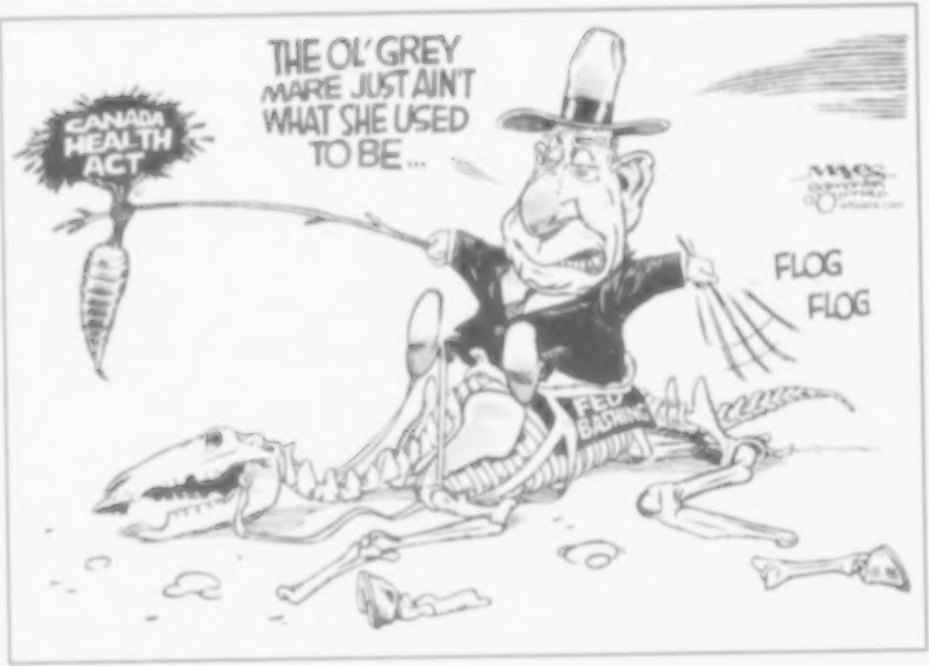
The UFA's successor was no more of a fan of political parties. Inherent in Premier William Aberhart's Social Credit theory was the notion of "plebiscitary democracy," an arrangement under which people surrender their right to decide, and criticize in return for the promise that politicians will implement the "general will."[illegible]

When the Conservatives came to power, one could still see a preference for consensus and a distaste for criticism. The early years were a period of ongoing battles with Ottawa, and most other discussion was crowded off the political agenda. Peter Lougheed was impatient with opposition to his strong stand on provincial rights. Dividing the world into "doers" or "knockers," he consigned opposition to his government to the latter category. The present Conservative government takes a similarly dim view of opposition. Ralph Klein has discredited opponents by labelling them variously as "left wing nuts," "misguided academics," or the worst epithet in Alberta: "socialists."

There is a remarkable consistency in the positions taken by governing parties in Alberta towards opposition parties and to opposition itself. The consequence has been that opposition as a concept is suspect, which places opposition parties in an invidious position.[illegible] Opposition parties come into their own during legislative sessions, but the Alberta Legislature has not been overworked. During the later Manning years, it sat for six or seven weeks in the year, and when Lougheed was at the helm opposition was so weak that the Legislature was largely irrelevant.[illegible] Ralph Klein has complained that the Legislative Assembly afflicts its inhabitants with "Dome disease" (referring to the dome on the Alberta Legislature), so he tries to escape its confines as much as possible. During the Spring 2004 session of the Legislature, the Premier could barely hide his impatience, especially with unaccustomed criticism from the media.

Tracing the history of non-partisanship in Alberta, Leslie Pal observes that political "leaders and their parties were expected to 'rise above and reach beyond' petty squabbles." He advises that the claim of non-partisanship should be taken with a grain of salt: "As a discourse and as a practice, it masks the partisan use of power to serve some interests at the expense of others. But it resonates so deeply in the Alberta political psyche that, paradoxically, the pursuit and maintenance of power must somehow appear disinterested and impartial."[illegible] As the benign face of the Alberta government, the Premier was not seen to be directly involved in the unpleasant cost-cutting measures undertaken in the mid-1990s.

Opposition parties have been numerically strong on occasion, but they have not been



COURTESY ARTIZANS SYNDICATE, EDMONTON

Ralph Klein is not the first, nor is he likely to be the last, Alberta Premier to engage in the time-honoured tradition of "fed-bashing."

able to build on that strength because governing parties have been successful in deflecting opposition outwards. The deep-rooted suspicion of the federal government, which has existed almost from the outset and has been cultivated by successive governments, is an integral part of the Alberta world view. A lot of energy has been dissipated fighting external battles, leaving little energy for intraprovincial issues.

Deflecting opposition outwards, mainly towards the federal government but sometimes towards central Canada, is a tactic that has been used frequently in Alberta.[illegible] Opposition parties are thus placed in a very awkward position in the province, since they may appear to be disloyal if they seem to defend Ottawa rather than provincial interests. By appealing to important provincial symbols like natural resource ownership, or by tapping into the reservoir of western alienation, provincial elites have been successful in mobilizing Albertans against the federal government. The Klein government has employed these tactics many times and continues to do so. The most recent examples are vowing to implement drastic changes to health care, the ongoing battle over the Kyoto Accord, opposition to the Canadian Wheat Board, and the "firewall" recommended by a handful of prominent Albertans in 2001.

This last proposal is a plan to erect a "firewall" to keep Ottawa out of provincial affairs. It would involve setting up a provincial police force to replace the RCMP, replacing the Canada Pension Plan with a provincial version, and collecting the provincial income tax.

There is also a suggestion that Alberta go its own way in health care, refusing funding from Ottawa and unshackling itself from the conditions of the Canada Health Act. The Premier was cool to the firewall idea when it was first proposed, but has subsequently appointed a committee to look more seriously at these proposals. Vivone comments that the firewall would be an interesting story "if the material wasn't so old, so boring, and so half-hearted." He contends that the government wants to divert attention away from thorny domestic issues. The on-again, off-again interest in the firewall illustrates how the Alberta government keeps dissatisfaction with the federal government on the boil. Threats to chart an independent course on health care act as a lightning rod that attracts attention and steers it away from other issues.

Diversionary tactics are as old as the province, and it is because the message does not fall on stony ground that they have been successful. But why, in an era of more sophisticated voters, have people been as susceptible to manipulation as previous generations of Albertans? To address this question, we need to look at how opinions are formed.

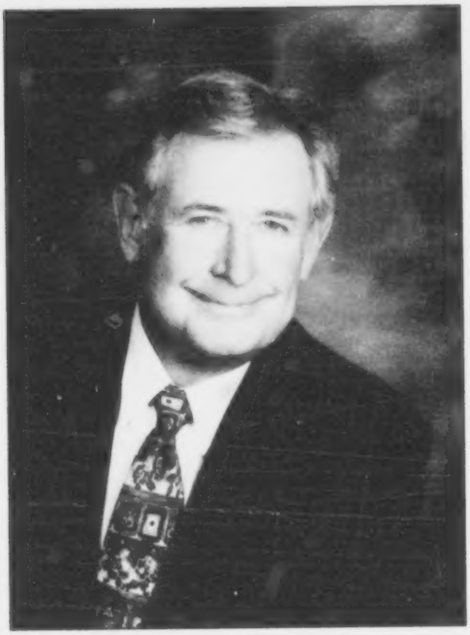
Early research on how people develop their beliefs revealed that people are not particularly interested in the major issues of the day, nor do they have much knowledge of them. Subsequently, scholars probed a little deeper to find out how individuals, who freely express opinions on everything from logging of old-growth forests to cloning, come to hold those views. Their investigation partially salvaged the reputation of democratic polities when they discovered the phenomenon they labelled "cue-taking."

Students of public opinion found that individuals use shortcuts to compensate for their lack of knowledge. Instead of doing the research themselves (since many topics are extremely complex), people take their cues from prominent individuals whom they respect and trust or from friends and acquaintances whose views they value (persons who might, indeed, be knowledgeable and perhaps ideologically compatible). Taking a cue from others provides a yardstick to assess the issue at hand and supplies the listener with a ready-made opinion. The reputation of the "cue-givers" is so important that the "cue-takers" focus more heavily on the "who" than the "what"—the messenger overwhelms the message.

Interpreting statements in the abstract is very different from interpreting them if they are attributed to a trusted source. During the 1993 provincial election, Liberal Leader Laurence Decore prescribed more or less the same medicine as Ralph Klein. Yet many Albertans were willing to place their trust in the folksy Premier (even though he represented a discredited party) rather than Decore, who came across as worthy but wooden. In a different arena, the endorsement of celebrities like Bridgitte Bardot and Oprah Winfrey may be sufficient for people to form an opinion on the seal hunt or the consumption of hamburgers.

W. Lance Bennett contends that because the news is personalized and focuses on attractive political personalities, the public is encouraged to adopt a passive attitude, permitting those personalities to do their thinking and acting for them. What relevance does this have for Alberta politics?

The material on cue-taking suggests that a popular, charismatic politician would be an important source for cues. Klein is regarded as a straight-talking, trustworthy guy-next-



COMPLIMENTS OF THE PREMIER'S OFFICE

Ralph Klein, Premier of Alberta, 2004.

door kind of person, so his views are respected. It is not surprising that they are adopted by many Albertans who do not have the time or expertise to absorb the finer points of deficits, global warming, or electricity deregulation. Albertans are also more receptive because the Premier has appealed to them in a very positive way. Cooper argues that the appeal "to an elevated and even noble aspiration of citizens" ensured their support.[77]

Public support can also be assured if the government has an effective media strategy. An important weapon to achieve this objective is the Public Affairs Bureau in Edmonton, which controls the flow of government information. Informally dubbed the "Ministry of Truth," it was revamped by Klein, reports directly to him, and now has a staff of well over 200 people. As Martin describes it, "the bureau … had one prime directive: to decide what the truth should be, give it a positive spin, polish it, and make sure the government stuck to the script. It rarely lied to the media, but just as rarely told the entire truth."[78] He goes on to say that the staff also provided such helpful services "as clogging phone lines of talk shows with pro-Tory opinion and blitzing media polls with votes supporting Klein's actions."[79]

As a former journalist, the Premier realizes that good communication is more than conveying a message. Ideally, it should also elicit the desired response from its audience. Murray Edelman, who has long been interested in the construction of public opinion, contends that leaders play on the emotions of the public by symbolically framing issues so people are "aroused by images of problems and reassured by promised solutions." They are also cued by leaders who draw attention to problems and enemies.[80] With the help of the Public Affairs Bureau, the Klein government has ensured that Albertans pick up the right cues.

Ever since Ralph Klein stepped onto the political stage, he has surprised people. Although his detractors considered his candidacy a joke, he won the mayoralty race in 1980. As an outsider he was not expected to succeed in his bid for the Conservative leadership; nor was he expected to lead the party to victory in the election in 1993. Throughout his political career, Klein has confounded his critics and delighted his supporters. He has demonstrated many times that he has his finger on the public pulse. His sudden decision to abolish the MLA pension plan is a case in point. However, his greatest gift is his ability to connect with "just plain folks" and earn their trust. His personal popularity consistently runs about 20 points higher than that of his party.

Premier Klein vowed to slay the deficit and has succeeded in doing so. The provincial debt is melting away and will, in all likelihood, be wiped out in Alberta's centennial year. He has put in place the building blocks of the "new economy," which is attracting investment and people to Alberta. The western tiger's roar is heard across the country and beyond.

Despite the kudos that Klein has received, the years of frugality have taken their toll. Some money has been reinvested in education, but only after bitter battles. Health care too has received injections of funds, but the medical facilities cannot keep up with the booming population. Municipal governments, particularly in the two major cities, are struggling to cope with increased demands with inadequate revenue. Other casualties of fiscal prudence are persons on low incomes and social assistance. During the province's deficit-reduction phase, the government often equated the province's problems with those faced by a homeowner. It would be fair to ask if Al and Berta would have neglected regular maintenance on their home knowing that they or their children would have to incur greater expenditures in the future.

The combination of a population increase and underfunding for roads, schools, and hospitals has created a huge backlog in these areas. The government seems determined to build at least some of this infrastructure using the P3 (public-private partnership) model. While such a model is attractive in the short term, it has been shown in other jurisdictions to be costly in the long term.[51]

Conclusion

Alberta's twelfth Premier will take his place alongside other notable provincial leaders like Peter Lougheed, Ernest Manning, and William Aberhart. He has put the province on the map not only within Canada but also internationally. A controversial figure, he has supporters and detractors who are equally fervent. There is no doubt he saved the Conservative Party from certain defeat in 1993, and for this alone he has earned the gratitude of the party faithful. He has positioned the province well to attract investment in the current globalized environment.

There has been some recent criticism that the Klein government is drifting and lacks a clear vision for the future. Having slain the deficit, the provincial government appears to have run out of steam.

The Premier has announced that he intends to contest the next election, expected in early 2005, and it is likely to be his last political contest. The legacy he wants to leave is a debt-free province. Unless there is a catastrophic drop in oil prices, this is quite likely to happen in Alberta's centennial year. Despite calls to invest part of the surplus in much-needed infrastructure, the government has so far resisted.

History will judge whether Alberta's first Premier of the twenty-first century did the right thing by erasing the debt so rapidly. Perhaps future generations will regard this goal as self-indulgent, judging the price too high when the social cost is factored in.

In a strange way, Ralph Klein can be seen as a metaphor for Alberta. He seems to epitomize qualities and experiences that parallel those of the province. An outsider, a maverick, someone whose talents have been underestimated, he has surprised many on his rise to power.

Alberta too is considered a maverick, a province that stepped out of the political mainstream for half a century, a province that is puzzling, often underestimated, and sometimes maligned. Albertans deplore snobbery and consider themselves "just plain folks." We are also prickly, have a tendency to brag too much, and lack patience. This might account for Ralph Klein's popularity: when Albertans look at him, it is as if they are looking into a mirror and seeing themselves, warts and all.

Notes

1. For example, funding for education under Social Credit was generous. By the end of the 1960s, total spending on education rose to 33.4% of the budget. Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 182.
2. See Mark Lisac, *The Klein Revolution* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1995); Frank Dabbs, *Ralph Klein: A Maverick Life* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 1995); Don Martin, *King Ralph: The Political Life and Success of Ralph Klein* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2000).
3. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 13.
4. Martin, *King Ralph*, 36.
5. Ibid., 38.
6. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 33.
7. Ibid., 24–34.
8. http://www.assembly.ab.ca/lao/library/premiers/klein/htm.
9. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 43. His sensitivity to criticism has been demonstrated over the years.
10. Ibid., 66.
11. Lisac, *The Klein Revolution*, 78.
12. Martin, *King Ralph*, 91.
13. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 73.
14. Martin, *King Ralph*, 101.
15. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 80.
16. Rich Vivone (ed.), *Insight into Government: Alberta's Independent Newsletter on Policy & Politics* 5, no. 30 (1991): 8.
17. *Insight* 6, no. 17 (1992): 3.
18. Martin, *King Ralph*, 105.
19. Lisac, *The Klein Revolution*, 67.
20. Martin suggests that the weather played a role in the result: on polling day southern and central Alberta experienced freezing rain, transforming many roads into skating rinks. Rural voters who supported Klein did not venture out, and in any case they were confident that he would win anyway. Martin, *King Ralph*, 113.
21. Ibid., 115.

22. Robert Mansell, "Fiscal Reconstruction in Alberta: An Overview," in Christopher J. Bruce, Ronald D. Kneebone, and Kenneth J. McKenzie (eds.), *A Government Reinvented: A Study of Alberta's Deficit Elimination Program* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30.

23. Ibid., 47. Figures quoted on the debt and deficit vary considerably depending on whether the author is referring to gross or net debt or unmatured debt. For a discussion of these distinctions and the political nature of debt calculation, see Melville L. McMillan and Allan A. Warrack, "One-Track (Thinking) Towards Deficit Reduction," and David J. Cooper and Dean Neu, "The Politics of Debt and Deficit in Alberta," in Gordon Laxer and Trevor Harrison (eds.), *The Trojan Horse: Alberta and the Future of Canada* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), 163–81. Rand Dyck states that Getty accumulated a provincial debt of $15 billion. Rand Dyck, *Provincial Politics Towards the Turn of the Century* (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall Canada, Inc., 1996), 553.

24. Dabbs, *Ralph Klein*, 90.

25. Peter J. Smith, "Alberta: Experiments in Governance," in Keith Brownsey and Michael Howlett (eds.), *The Provincial State in Canada: Politics in the Provinces and Territories* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 2001), 296.

26. Quoted in ibid., 296–97.

27. Martin, *King Ralph*, 122.

28 Arguably the Klein government is now *under*-estimating oil and gas revenue. Revenue forecasts in the budget for 2003–04 are based on an oil price of $26 per barrel, much lower than the price projected by most analysts.

29. Martin, *King Ralph*, 123.

30. Quoted in Kevin Taft, *Shredding the Public Interest: Ralph Klein and 25 Years of One-Party Government* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Parkland Institute, 1997), 83. This was not the last time Albertans heard about the unfortunate couple whose fortunes tracked those of the province. Their situation worsened and they had to downsize. We have not heard what Al and Berta would do if they won the lottery.

31. The Liberal leader had been preaching fiscal prudence for the previous four years while the Tories denied that a problem existed.

32. Lisac, *The Klein Revolution*, 129.

33. Richard Magnus, "Controlling the Deficit: Alberta in Perspective," in *Canadian Parliamentary Review* (1994). http://www.parl.gc.ca/infopart/English/17n4_94_e.htm (November 3, 2003).

34. Vivone, *Insight* 7, no. 21 (1993): 3.

35. Cooper and Neu argue that deficits and debts are inflated by governments' accounting methods. They contend that the Alberta government wanted to "fuel public anxiety" about the extent of the debt. The "cash basis of accounting," which does this, is not used in the non-governmental sector. Cooper and Neu, "The Politics of Debt," 167.

36. Mansell, "Fiscal Reconstruction," 48.

37. Barry Cooper and Mebs Kanji, *Governing in Post-Deficit Times: Alberta in the Klein Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 57.

38. Patrick Impero Wilson, "Causal Story: Strategic Politics and Welfare State Retrenchment," *Social Science Journal* 37, no. 1 (2000): 100.

39. The 1994 budget cut 12% from education, 18% from health care, and 19.3% from social services. It called for a 25% reduction in the size of the public service. Wilson, "Causal Story," 102.

40. Andrew Nikiforuk, "Mr. Dress-up," *National Post Business Magazine* (December 1, 2002).

41. Wilson, "Causal Story," 105.

42. Vivone, *Insight* 15, no. 37 (2001): 2.

43. Quoted in Nikiforuk, "Mr. Dress-up."

44. Cooper and Kanji, *Governing in Post-Deficit Times*, 159.

45. Martin, *King Ralph*, 141.

46. David Osborne and Ted Gaebler co-authored *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), which became very popular in government circles in the United States. The influence of these individuals and of Roger Douglas is evident in the vocabulary of restructuring in Alberta. That governments should steer, not row, was straight out of Osborne and Gaebler's book, and the aphorism about crossing canyons was a Roger Douglas favourite. These phrases were a shorthand way of expressing complex ideas.

47. Herman M. Schwartz, "Reinvention and Retrenchment: Lessons from the Application of the New Zealand Model to Alberta, Canada," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 16, no. 3 (1997): 419.

48. Doreen Barrie, "Government Enters New Era: Profound Changes in Alberta Raising Questions," *Calgary Herald*, April 1, 1995.

49. *The Calgary-Edmonton Corridor: Take Action Now to Ensure the Tiger's Roar Doesn't Fade*. TD Economics, Special Report, April 22, 2003. http://www.td.economics/special/alta03.pdf (April 4, 2004).

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Jacqueline S. Ismael, "Privatization of Social Services: A Heuristic Approach," in Jacqueline Ismael and Yves Vaillancourt (eds.), *Privatization and Provincial Social Services in Canada: Policy, Administration, and Service Delivery* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1988), 1.

53. Ibid., 3.

54. This is one of three strategies identified by P. Pierson to enable governments to minimize resistance. The other two are division (playing interests off against each other) and compensation (selectively rewarding important groups). Quoted in Wilson, "Causal Story," 98.

55. Ibid., 99.

56. These regional authorities are composed of members hand-picked by the provincial government, so their complaints, if any, would be made in private. For a brief period, some members were elected, but they were subsequently "let go" because the provincial government did not believe they were playing a useful role.

57. Roger Gibbins and Keith Archer, "What do Albertans Think? The Klein Agenda on the Public Opinion Landscape," in Bruce et al., *A Government Reinvented*, 465–67.

58. Ibid., 465.

59. There is a great deal of literature on the subject going back to Anthony Down's 1957 classic, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).

60. http://www.polara.ca/new/LIBRARY/surveys/ralphklein.html (April 5, 2004).

61. Lisac, *The Klein Revolution*, 164.

62. Martin, *King Ralph*, 235.

63. Other irritants were tariffs, which had a disproportionate impact on prairie farmers, and high freight rates.

64. L.G. Thomas, *The Liberal Party of Alberta: A History of Politics in the Province of Alberta, 1905–1921* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959), 93. The Alberta & Great Waterways scandal involved accusations that Liberal politicians were personally involved in a project for which the government had floated bonds. It was not the opposition that revealed what was going on but Liberal backbenchers. For further details of this episode, see the biography in this volume on A.C. Rutherford.

65. For a discussion of non-partisanship in successive governments, see Leslie Pal, "The Political Executive and Political Leadership in Alberta," in Allan Tupper and Roger Gibbins (eds.), *Government and Politics in Alberta* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 1–29.

66. W.K. Rolph, *Henry Wise Wood of Alberta* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), 66.

67. C.B. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta: Social Credit and the Party System*, Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 233.

68. I suppose that one could make the argument that Albertans are affected by this history to the extent that they are not comfortable with controversy, preferring consensus on issues.

69. Pal, "The Political Executive," 21.

70. Ibid., 5.

71. Macpherson terms this a "quasi-colonial" attitude more fitting for a jurisdiction that has not yet attained provincehood. In the territorial period, governments could do little more than petition for the needs of the territory, but because Alberta had a quasi-party system, its behaviour has been quasi-colonial. Macpherson, *Democracy in Alberta*, 236.

72. *Insight* 18, no. 13 (2003): 1.

73. John R. Zaller, James H. Kuklinski, and Dennis Chong, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

74. James H. Kuklinski and Norman Hurley, "On Hearing and Interpreting Political Messages: A Cautionary Tale of Citizen Cue-Taking," *Journal of Politics* 56, no. 3 (August 1994): 729–79.

75. Ibid., 747.

76. W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion* (New York: Longman, 1988), 23.

77. Barry Cooper, *The Klein Achievement* (University of Toronto Monograph Series on Public Policy and Public Administration, #1, 1995), 100–101.

78. Martin, *King Ralph*, 134.

79. Ibid.

80. Quoted in Bennett, *News*, 108–9.

81. Lewis Auerbach, Arthur Donner, Douglas D. Peters, Monica Townson and Armine Yalnizyan, "Funding Hospital Infrastructure: Why P3s Don't Work and What Will" (Ottawa: Centre for Policy Alternatives, November 2003).

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Alberta

TWENTIETH

edited by **BRADFORD J. RENNIE**

From the optimism associated with provincial status in 1905, through the trials of Depression and war, the boom times of the post-war period, and the economic vagaries of the 1980s and the1990s, the twentieth century was a time of growth and hardship, development, challenge and change, for Alberta and its people. And during the century, twelve men, from a variety of political parties and from very different backgrounds, led the government of this province.

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